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# THE STORY OF SHELAGH, OLAF CUARAN'S DAUGHTER

C.A. PARKER



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*Photo, by A. E. Brickhill.*

THE KIRKGARTH OF MARY.

*Frontispiece.*

THE STORY OF  
SHELAGH,  
OLAF CUARAN'S DAUGHTER

A SAGA OF THE NORTHMEN IN  
CUMBERLAND IN THE  
TENTH CENTURY

BY

C. A. PARKER, M.D., F.R.C.S.E.

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DEDICATED

“TO MY WIFE.”

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## FORE WORD.

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ON the stone monuments, weapons, ornaments, and other articles belonging to our Norse ancestors, inscriptions in Runic characters have frequently been found, which prove that the art of writing was not unknown. Runes, derived from some earlier alphabet, which is still a subject of controversy, were formerly a puzzle ; but are now day by day forced to reveal their hidden secrets, often very human and pathetic, and sometimes obviously believed by the writer to have magical virtues. These characters were not, however, used for books or correspondence.

The history of the Norse was handed down by word of mouth, in songs and tales called sagas; sung and told first by professional skalds, who were often no mean poets, and afterwards no doubt by any who could remember them ; it being a point of honour not to vary the tale. When the Latin alphabet came in with Christianity, (Latin being the ecclesiastical language), some sagas were happily reduced to writing, and survive for our benefit ; giving us vivid word pictures of the daily life of Norsemen in Iceland and Norway at the very period when others of their kin were settling in Cumberland.

The reason why no Lake Country saga has survived is not far to seek. The only person who had sufficient culture and leisure to write one out would be a monk, who was not above associating with the people; and the monks were either Norman or leaned to the Norman party then in power, who regarded all Englishmen as barbarians; and not only made little distinction between Norse, Angle, and Welsh, but knew little and cared less for their history and beliefs.

Yet there must have been many a saga tale told round the fire on winter evenings in the homesteads of Cumberland. Not only those of old Norway, but of heroes and deeds belonging to the Lake Country; while women spun, men made nets, carved woodwork and mended gear, and children listened with round eyes until bidden away to bed. Such a tale might mayhap take the form of this story.

It must be remembered that this was no uncouth district as times went. The art of the Norse monuments left to us proves that. The Viking was not the barbarous ruffian commonly represented. He was undoubtedly the best all round man of his day, and his profession was at first an honourable one, though it degenerated towards the close of the period into the common sea robber. Our Elizabethan adventurers afford a just parallel. The Viking ships, tools, weapons, and the very pillars and beams of their houses were decorated and carved,

their art rising highest perhaps in the like of the splendid sword hilt found in Eigg, and their descendants settled here brought their arts with them. A strong and powerful Norse colony certainly peopled Cumberland and Westmorland, and probably repopulated Yorkshire after its devastation by William I.

The "Helge Lay," finest of all the Eddic poems, is thought to have been composed on the shore of the Irish Sea. It may well have been in Cumbria; and if so, why not in the Gosforth district? "It was certainly in the land of the Cumbri," writes Prof. Collingwood, "that a literary movement almost as important as that which created the Edda took place. . . . No other part of the Viking world could surpass this district in literary and artistic culture. . . . The neighbourhood of Gosforth was indeed geographically the focus of all the influences which fostered the birth of the Edda poems. Wherever they were composed, it was here that they were illustrated almost at the moment of their production . . . Heysham, Halton, and Penrith show some examples of the same art, but the centre of this Edda illustrating region, and the richest in remains is Gosforth, with its crosses and hogbacks, and the contemporary relics at the neighbouring sites of Waberthwaite, Muncaster, Beckermest, &c."

Thus we may possess a real local Norse poem.

Many of the characters in this saga tale are historical, others such as Stefnir, Gudröd, &c., were real personages, others again such as Barna, Doka, Vikar, are shadows of men who existed. The title role, Shelagh, is a sketch, one account saying that a daughter of Olaf Cuaran married a landowner in Britain; probably meaning Cumbria. That women played a great part in turning the Norsemen to Christianity I firmly believe.

C.A.P.

*Gosforth, 1909.*









## THE STORY OF SHELAGH, OLAF CUARAN'S DAUGHTER.

**N**OW it is to be told that, when eight CHAPTER I.  
hundred sixty and two winters had OF THE  
passed since the birthtide, Harald son VOW OF  
of Halfdan the Black succeeded to FAIRHAIR.  
the kingdom of Westfold, in the south of  
Norway. And his saga sayeth, "King Harald  
sent his men to a girl hight Gyda; . . . for she  
was wondrous beautiful but of high mood  
withal. Now when the messengers came there  
and gave their message to her, she made  
answer:—"Tell to King Harald these my  
words, 'I will only agree to be his lawful wife  
upon the condition that he shall first, for sake  
of me, put under him the whole of Norway, so  
that he may bear sway over that kingdom as  
freely and fully as King Eric over the realm of  
Sweden, or King Gorm over Denmark; for  
only then, methinks, can he be called king of  
a people.'"

Now his men came back to King Harald, bringing him the words of the girl ; and, said they, she was so bold and heedless that she well deserved the king should put her to some disgrace. Then answered the king, " This maid hath not done or spoken so much amiss that she should be punished, but the rather should she be thanked for her words. She minds me of somewhat that it seems wonderful I did not think of before. And now I make the solemn vow, and take God who made me and rules over all things, to witness, that never shall I clip or comb my hair until I have subdued all Norway with scatt, and duties, and lordships ; or, if not, have died in the seeking." Then all the jarls and messengers shouted aloud, and clashed sword and shield, for such an oath suited them well. " Hear the king ! " they cried, " We are witnesses, Odin ! Skoal ! to the King of Norway ! " And Guttorm Captain of the host gave great thanks to the king his nephew for his oath, saying, " It was royal work fulfilling royal rede."

And so the thing began. Then did the king make war, and subdued folk-kingdom after folk-kingdom, joining them with his own Westfold ; but the task was great, and his hair and beard grew longer and shaggier, so that his enemies named him Shockhead. Being of generous mind, he warred not with the yeoman or poor man, but against the Viking kinglets, and was no tyrant.<sup>1</sup> Many of these last had before the days of Harald taken ship and sailed to the

Western Isles, founding kingdoms in Orkney, Shetland, the Hebrides, Galloway, Ireland and Man.

Now it fell on a day that Eric of Hordaland, Sulki and Soli of Rogaland, Roald and Rigg of Thelmark, and Hadd the Hardy, kings of the north, leagued them with the Vikings of the Western Isles, led by Ceotwan the thick-necked and Haklang, called Thorir Longchin, and fell upon Shockhead at Hafrsfirth, where the goats feed. Hard was the battle when Harald launched his ships. The Baresarks roared and whooped, and there was hammering of swords on bucklers. There fell King Eric, and after him Sulki and Soli. Then Longchin went baresark, and laid his ship against King Harald's, but in vain, for Shockhead's men hurling huge stones, boarded their enemy's vessel and cleared it utterly. So died Longchin, and Ceotwan fled to an island, where after furious combat, Shockhead melted his men as snow melteth in the sun. So had the king the victory, and the northern men ran away over Jadar.

After the battle the king entered Jarl Ragnvald's house in More and bathed, and after solemn ceremonies, Ragnvald cut and combed his locks, which had been unshorn ten winters. This done, the stout jarl laughed aloud and cried, "Shockhead no longer ! the king is the goodliest man amongst us. Skoal ! Harald Harfagr, Harald of the Fair Hair !" And all said he was most soothly named for he had

plenteous hair and goodly. And as "Fairhair," Norway knew him for fifty years as Father and Over Lord.

CHAPTER  
II.  
OF THE  
FLIGHT  
FROM MAN.

MANY of the kings beaten by Fairhair sailed to join their kin in the Western Isles, or founded kingdoms in Ireland; from time to time making raids in summer on the coast of Norway. Then Fairhair, with many long ships, set out to make an end of them, over-running Orkney, the Hebrides, and Galloway with fire and sword, slaying and driving out the Vikings, many of whom fled to Iceland. Then the king sailed for the Isle of Man.

Great was the stir among the Norsemen in Man when these tidings reached them. Well they knew that they had no chance in an island against such a force. So in haste the Thing was held and it was judged to flee while there was time, ere a worse thing came to them. The saga sayeth truly that they fled into Scotland, but not into Galloway which was the place from which Fairhair was coming, but to that country whose fells beckoning across the sea minded them so fairly of their native Norway, into the part of Strathclyde called Cumbria, which was then accounted Scotland. In haste the women made shift to pack their household goods, while the men gathered gear and sheep,<sup>2</sup> loading their vessels till the gun-wales sank low; then climbing on board they hoisted sail, and men pulled hard while the women looked sadly back, as Barna their

leader cried, "When the eagle comes he will find the hawk's nest empty." So the ships took their way, some few to the Solway, some to Mor Cam and Duddon, and many to the great firth at the mouth of the Esk, which would hide their dragons so well.

Thus, men, women and children; household gear, and Herdwick sheep; fugitives but sword in hand; the Norsemen our fore-elders came hither.

So was Fairhair confounded, for "he found no prey in Man, for the folk had heard of his warfare, and fled with all their goods," so in despite burned he their steadings.

NOW Barna and Ascetel were of the greatest men in Man, and Barna being much thought of though young, looked to become some day king of the island. And it fell out that their ships, the Raven and the Swan, were the last to leave, and Barna had his brother Herd with him as stem-man.\* Overladen with gear and folk they fell behind the other vessels making for Esk mouth, and were sore beset by a strong south wind which arose later in the day, causing the waves to rise, and carrying them into the current<sup>3</sup> that comes from Wales. Then said Herd to his brother "Methinks we are fey and will be caught in Ran's† net," and Barna answered, "As the Norns have said so will it be. We draw nigh unto the shore, and may not

CHAPTER  
III.  
OF THE  
DEATH  
AND  
BURIAL  
OF HERD.

---

\* Captain of forecastle, second in command.

† Ran, goddess of the sea. Norns, fates.

come at the fiord." So saying he pulled hard upon the steering oar. The good ship answered, turning with groaning timbers towards the sandy coast, and Herd, loosing his hold, stumbled up the forecastle to see where they might land. Even as he moved, the Raven struck hard on the hidden rocks that lie out from Derigh, the shock pitching Herd overboard, so that he smote his head against the oars and sank stunned in the arms of Ran. "The Norns have spoken," cried Barna in bitter grief; while Thora, Herd's young wife, made as if she would cast herself into the sea after him, but strong hands held her back and the women cried "Live! Live for thy child! thy Herd's son." The tide being full the Raven floated off, sore wounded, and the rowers pulled hard while others threw out the sea that ran in, so that with much toil won they to the shore, but hardly.

Ascetel, seeing the disaster from a distance astern, turned the Swan to the northward and landed in a cove formed by a little ness.

It was an unlucky landing, and the wanderers had to turn at once and unload their vessels and haul them up as the tide ebbed. At sunrise the death current washed Herd's body ashore near the Swan. Trees<sup>4</sup> growing near by were felled, heather gathered by the women, and shelters made; and on the day following the Norsemen, weeping, laid upon a funeral pile of wood the body of the young Viking, dressed in his war mail and with his sword and

shield. Then Barna bound the hellshoes on the dead man's feet, that he might be able to walk on his long journey to Valhalla, and applied the torch ; and the wood smoke rose aloft, dark from the fire, mingled with weeping. When all was burnt, the ashes and bones were reverently placed in the earthen jar and buried with the iron of the weapons ; and a barrow raised over them on the ness overlooking the sea Herd loved to rove. The Norsemen walked in procession round the barrow while Barna sang :—

Gone now is Herd  
Well beloved brother mine,  
Exile from Norway  
Scorning the Master hand,  
Over the billow's roll,  
Over the gannet's bath,  
O'er the whale's country,  
Of home bereft.  
Caught by the dark wave  
Ran overwhelmed him.  
Here now we leave him  
Feasting with Odin.  
So shall we lie.

And men do say, that the rocky point called Barnscar is Barna's scar, though forgetters say it is Borran's scar, not remembering that all scars are borrans\* ; and of a truth men call the ness Herd's Nab yet, though in the tongue of the common folk it is Herdy Neb. Many winters after, a man digging to build his house thereon found Herd's urn<sup>5</sup> and bones, which are

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\* Heaps of stones.

with us yet, and this man's son married a wife whose name was Barnes, and whose neighbours name was Herd, which things are a rune for reading.

CHAPTER  
IV.  
OF THE  
TAKING OF  
LAND.

**A**FTER these things, Hviti stood forth boldly and cried that Barna should be Lawman<sup>6</sup> and Chief, for he was of king's kindred ; and Oddi, Blaka, and Svan said it should be so, all clashing arms in consent, save Ascetel, who liked it not. So on the morrow Ascetel went with the Swan to Esk mouth, and abode there ; and many winters after, Anlaf his son was chief man in that place, and dwelt in a strange house of stone and lime curiously fashioned, having double stone floors with a fire spot at the one end and a tall hollow tower at the other, the draught of which drew the heat between the floors ; of which the Welshmen said it was built in the bygonies by men of Rome.\* The Strathclyde Welsh called Anlaf, Avelaf ; and it may well be that the smooth water of the haven was called glas after the Gaelic custom, as in Douglas, and was Avelaf's or Avelin's glas : for after long years travellers † found the children there singing of " King Avelin who had his palace here," and the place name but little changed to Ravenglass, but some say to the contrary as men will, though the Rome walls stand yet.

But Barna and Barna's men stayed, for their ship was hurt, and all made Barna Lawman,

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\* Walls Castle.      † Camden in 1586.



and came to him each year to hold the Thing ; using a circle of twelve stones set in a place yet called Graystones<sup>7</sup> Croft as a Peace Stead, wherein all things might be settled and no man speak in anger. And thereto came all the Norsemen around, and made booths to dwell in for the night, and for purposes of barter, and held games and sports the next day at the howe of laking.\*

As the coast district was but little inhabited, save for a few wild Welsh, the Norsemen took possession of as much land as they could encompass in a day, and hallowed it with fire. Starting at daybreak and carrying burning peat in a bronze pot, they tramped round swamp and through woods, hewing their way, and notching trees for a boundary, until they came to a bare topped howe. Here made they a bale fire of logs, and set up a meer stone as a landmark ; and so on to another fitting spot from whence the first fire could be seen, where a second fire was lit and a meer stone set up. Thus did they throughout the whole day until at even they came to the sea again, where Barna stood and cried, " Witness ye all, that I have lawfully gone round this land with fire, and taken it all into my holding." And on the morrow they marked out the " homefield " and divided the land amongst them.

The year following, a strange long-haired star appeared in the sky, whereat the Norsemen rejoiced greatly, calling it the sister of the sunshine.

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\* Lakinghow.

On the howe near the homefield Barna built him a skali, or wooden hall to dwell in, though at the first a skali was but a sleeping place, and the house there is called Scale How to this day; and his men built other smaller skalar, where their names may yet be read, at Hviti-hryggr, Blaka's How and Oddi's How and Svang,\* and seated them by the Angle men in peace, caring naught for the Strathclyde Welsh. For Strathclyde was a Welsh kingdom, of which Cumbria was part, extending from Mor Cam to Dunbarton, and in Cumbria<sup>8</sup> many Angles from Northumbria had settled, and Donal was king thereof. Alongside of Strathclyde was Northumbria, stretching from the Humber to the Forth, peopled by Danes and Angles, and having kings of Danish blood. And of the rest of England was Eadward King, and both Welsh and Angles were Christian.<sup>9</sup>

CHAPTER  
V. OF  
DOKA'S  
TRAVELL-  
ING.

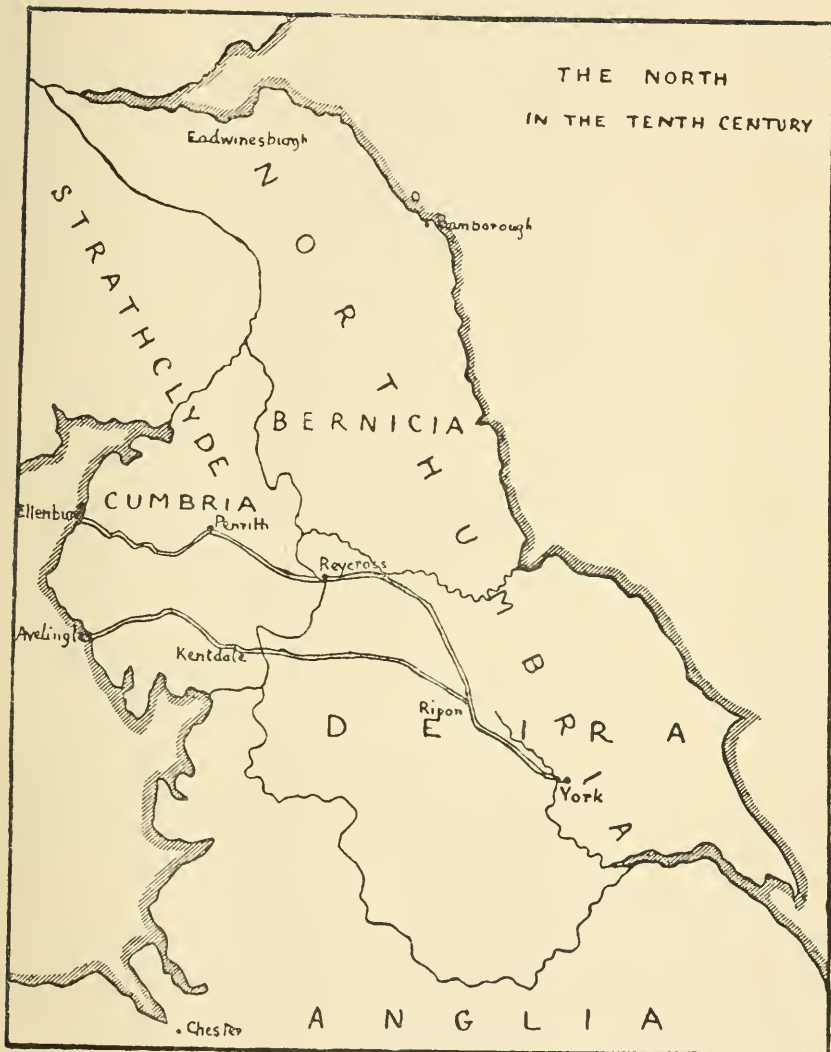
**N**OW Doka,† Barna's son, having seen fourteen winters, took men and went east to the Rome road running north from Avelinglas; which having found they wondered at for its straightness and hardness, being paved with stone so that a horse made little mark upon it. Crossing this they came to a sheltered dale, having meadowland umbered with trees and a great marsh with many wild fowl thereon, and running through the marsh a beck the Welshmen called Blegen, meaning a bend. For this beck, turning, ran

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\* Whitriggs, Black How, Oddy House, Swang.

† Modern forms, Docker, Barnes.

THE NORTH  
IN THE TENTH CENTURY



back from the sea to the fell in wondrous kind, until it came to a larger beck called Irt, and so through the Angles land at Irtun. Hard by the marsh were many cots of the Welshmen and some Angle houses, and among them one house larger than the rest, but ill made of wattled boughs and clay, and thatched with broom, and over all a cross. And the Norsemen looking in wondered to see a great cross of wood, and a man having his hair cut away across his forehead after the Irish custom, holding up his hand and speaking in the tongue of Rome. Of whom Doka asking the name of the place, the man answered that the Angles called it Gasford,\* from the wild fowl that abounded in the marsh, and that the house was a Christ house or kirk, and he, Christ's priest. But when he would have preached unto them, they laughing bade him talk to the wild geese; and went their way by the north end of the marsh to another dale, having high fells on each side and a great scree running down into a mere.

Then Hauk, the oldest man in the company, called this Vasdal, after the birthdale of his father in the Norland†; and the mere called they Vasvatn, and a lesser dale Buderdal. And so the land was named.

And Deka with his company returned to Gasford, and saw again a long-haired star, which they hailed as a token of good, and said

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\* Gosforth. Gas—a goose.

† Vasdalen in Scandinavia. There is a Buderdal in Iceland.

Doka, "Here will I abide and build me a skali, for the Gods are with me."

But that night after he had told his tale his mother said, "Not in my time, lad," and Doka abode with his parents, and when he had seen thirty winters, wedded Aud,<sup>10</sup> Avelaf's sister.

Twenty and one winters after the star, great lights appeared in the sky at even, about the time of Easter, as though the fells were afire \* ; and men feared what they might forebode, but the Norsemen thought well of them, saying they were the flashes of the blows of the Hammer of Thor. That year Donal, King of Strathclyde, submitted at Bakewell to Eadward, king of the English, with all the Strathclyde Welsh, and the King of Scots and all the nation of Scots, and King Ragnvald and the sons of Eadulf, with all those who dwelt in Northumbria, both English and Danish, and chose Eadward for Father and Overlord.<sup>11</sup> Then Barna, seeing the Norsemen were but a few, and they newly settled, confirmed the same to king Eadward, and afterward to Athelstan his son, and became the king's man.

**I**VAR the "Boneless," son of Ragnar Shaggybrecks, was deemed of all men the greatest of the Danish leaders. After him were many O'IVars ; Ragnvald O'Ivar, who took York, the chief town of Northumbria, and submitted to Eadward at Bakewell, but died soon after ; Sigtrygg O'Ivar called the "Crazy," who, having slain Niel his brother, was driven from his kingdom of

CHAPTER  
VI. OF THE  
COMING OF  
CUARAN TO  
YORK AND  
THE  
BATTLE OF  
BRUNAN-  
BURH.

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\* Aurora of 926.

Dublin by another brother, Guthfrith O'Ivar, and coming over sea took Ragnvald's place at York. Now it is known of all men that Sigtrygg had given up his murdering ways and turned Christian to marry the sister of Athelstan, King of England: but having won her took again to heathen sacrificing, so that his wife took off and away back to her brother. But a little while after died Sigtrygg, in the year of the great lights, leaving by the Irish princess, who was his first wife, five sons,<sup>12</sup> the elder of whom had but seventeen winters. And the arvale of Sigtrygg was scarce yet drunk, and the brothers backset and forset with this new job of being kings, when there was a great trumpeting without the walls of York, and here was Athelstan with all his army marching in at the gates. There was much stir and shouting, and a spear or two thrown, but it was over late for any fight worth talking of; and while the lads stood dumbfounded in the hall, the great son of Egwynna strode in with his chief men, and sat him down on the high seat with a cheerful shout.

Olaf<sup>13</sup> and Guthfrith stared, halting between anger and wonderment, for in sooth the king was good to look at. He was now come to his full strength, heavy gold rings were on his arms, and over his gilded mail hung an embroidered scarlet cloak with a jewelled clasp, while his brilliant eyes shone out beneath a mass of fair hair, through which golden threads were laced.

“How now, lads,” cried Athelstan, “have ye no welcome, it is dry work travelling.”

“Bring ale,” growled Guthfrith.

The king drank deep and tossed down the cup. “Now lads,” quoth he, “let us understand each other. I have come, being your mother’s brother——.”

“No mother of ours,” cried both in a breath. “As your father’s wife’s brother then, if you will, and your guardian, to settle this kingdom’s matters——.”

“We can do a turn ourselves,” snapped Olaf, and “Thanks for naught,” muttered his brother.

“Lads, lads,” laughed Athelstan, “ye are but bairns ; stick to your boy’s play and meddle not with such grown folk’s work as this. As Overlord, Northumbria is mine by right, and when ye are grown, after a bit, may be we will think of it. Strike hands on a bargain,” he added, holding out his own; but the two, stamping with fury, rushed down the hall. “I will be no man’s man on my father’s land,” shouted Guthfrith, “Go back to your mother the shepherdess,” yelled Olaf, and out they ran together in quest of their younger brothers.

“Stay,” cried the king as his men started in pursuit, “boys blood soon cools, we will talk with them again ; and now bring food.” But ere the meal was well finished the young princes were horsed and out of York.

“Which road now ?” said Olaf, “We had best part, brother,” answered Guthfrith, “he may follow, then shall one at least escape.



Athelstan will not harm the youngsters. I am for Scotland."

"And I for Dublin," groaned Olaf; "but by the Hammer of Thor I will come again. Speed ye brother mine."

So the lads gripped and parted, not without wet eyes, and Guthfrith took him to the court of Constantine of Scotland, where men say he fell a drinking and turned pirate: but Olaf made his way west and sailed to Dublin where his uncle Guthfrith O'Ivar was king, and thereafter men called him Olaf Cuaran, that is Olaf of the Sandal, from the quickness of his going.

King Athelstan laughed once more and moved on with his army to Dacor, where Constantine of Scotland, Owain, son of Donal, King of Strathclyde, and many others, confirmed peace with pledge and oaths in the month of July, and renounced all dealings with the heathen.

The year following Guthfrith O'Ivar and Cuaran came with an army, landing at Ellenburgh,\* and passing swiftly through Cumbria, already mostly in the hands of the Norsemen, commenced ravaging along the great Rome road that runs from Penrith to York until they came to that city. This they took, and were kings there for a little season. Soon came Athelstan with a greater force than theirs, and cast them out, so that they went back the way they came; but Olaf later made his way to Scotland, where he wedded the daughter of

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\* Maryport.



Constantine the king. Then Athelstan was wroth, and finding Constantine ready for revolt in aid of Cuaran the heathen, ravaged Scotland with his army, and destroyed the Danish stronghold at York.

Now all these kings whom Athelstan had beaten longed for revenge, and leagued them together ; and so, twelve winters after the great lights, came Constantine and Cuaran with a large army marching by the Rome road through Cumbria towards Chester. Here they were joined by Guthfrith Sigtryggson, Cuaran's brother, with a body of Northumbrians ; Owain, King of Strathclyde, who came with his men over the fells ; and Olaf of Dublin, whose father Guthfrith O'Ivar was now dead, with an army brought in 615 ships ; besides many vikings from Norway and the Isles. Thus they banded them together against Athelstan their Overlord, who delayed not, but rushed fiercely to the encounter, and old Barna heard of his coming.

And Barna sang :—

Though years be many,  
My word I break not ;  
King's man am I.  
A straw death ! a cow's death !  
Oh ! Father Odin  
Such death suits not me.

Then, donning his warmail and winged helmet, and bidding Doka his son to do likewise, the old warlord gathered his men, and bidding all that were true to their word to follow him,

hasted to aid the English king, on the field of Brunanburh.<sup>14</sup>

Olaf Cuaran, though one of the youngest of the invading leaders, led the attack, and drove Gudrek and Alfgeir, with their forces, far inland. Gudrek fell, and Alfgeir fled to Athelstan, who summoned forces and marched against Cuaran ; but hearing that he was opposed by an exceeding great army directed his captains to send messengers, to gain time, while he levied the needful numbers. From day to day they said the king would come, until Cuaran, growing angered, made a night attack. But the surprise failed, and a fight came about in which both sides fared badly. That night Athelstan came up with the main army, and the Norse leaders went to meet him. The day following, the king drew up his army in two parts, the Norsemen being on the higher ground beside the wood. Olaf also made two divisions, himself opposing Athelstan, and now the armies closed.

Then Barna pressed furiously forward, tossing his shield on his back and grasping his axe in both hands. He slew the man who bore the standard, cutting down the standard pole ; after which he smote down the Scottish leader, driving the axe through mail coat and body, and dealt blows on either side. But the Scots thrust at him at once with many spears, and the battle closed over him, hewing grimly to the last. Then the Norsemen with a great charge drove back the enemy, nor did they

stand long but fled, and all overtaken were slain.

Now the victorious Norsemen turned upon Cuaran's men, and taking them from behind, wrought great havoc. Many fled, and the Norsemen raised a shout of victory.

King Athelstan hearing, pressed on his force into the midst of the enemy. Cuaran's men gave ground and fled to their ships, the Saxons and Norsemen pursuing and hewing down from behind. Never was such slaughter seen in this island. Cuaran fled in a small vessel which he steered himself. Constantine and Olaf Guthfrithson also escaped, but :—

Five lay  
On that battlestead  
Young kings  
By sword laid to sleep  
So seven also  
Of Olaf's jarls  
Of the army countless  
Shipmen and Scots.

When the Norsemen returned from pursuing, Doka searched the field for his father's body ; and when they lifted Barna, beneath him lay Ceallach the prince, Constantine's son.

And Athelstan grieved for Barna and gave him a great burying, with his weapons and raiment, and bracelets on his wrists. And the Skald Egil sang :—

Dauntless the doughty champion  
Dashed on, the jarl's bold slayer ;  
In stormy stress of battle  
Stout hearted Barna fell

Green grows on soil of Vinheath  
Grass o'er our noble brother ;  
But we our woe—a sorrow  
Worse than death pang—must bear.

So ended Barna the Viking.

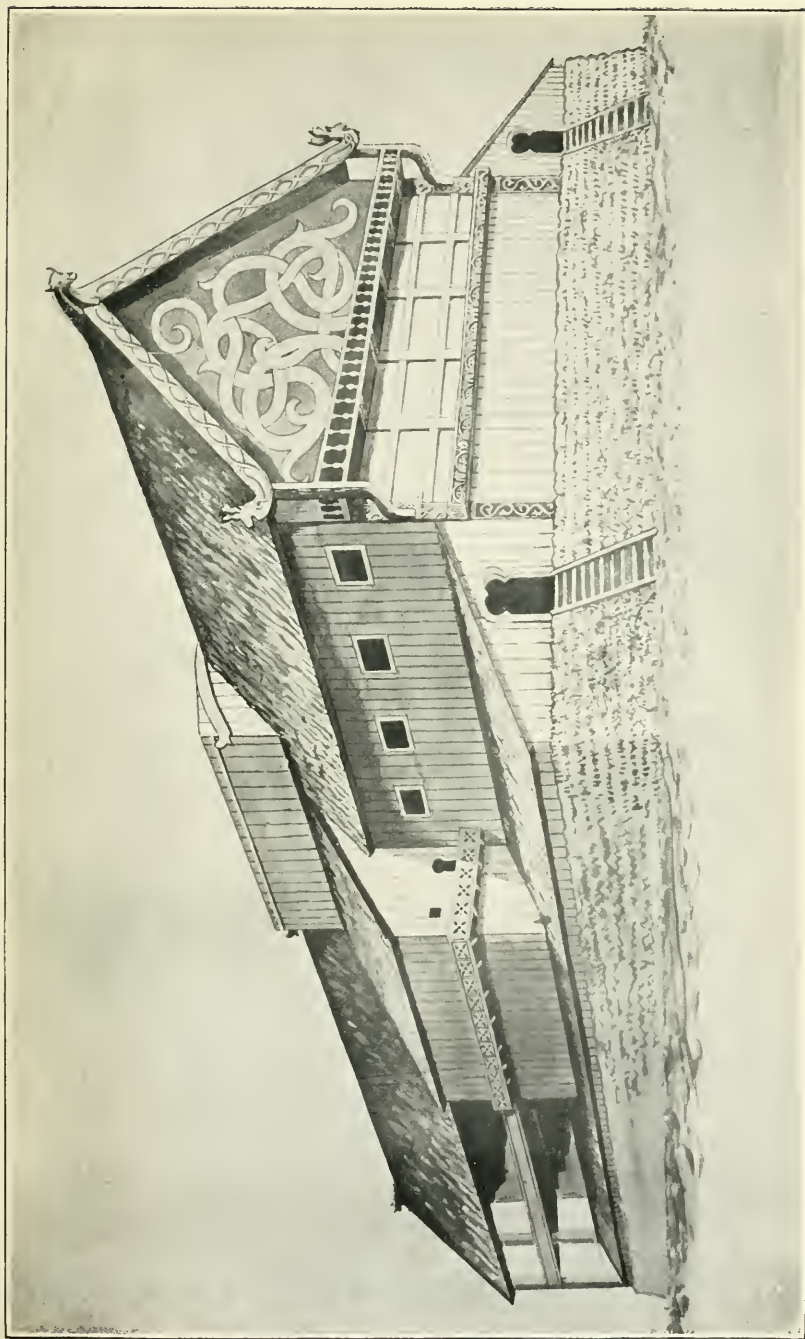
CHAPTER  
VII. OF  
THE  
SETTLE-  
MENT AT  
GASFORD.

AT the arveol\* held at the skali after the return from Brunanburh, Doka, Barna's son, was made lawman in his place, and took the oath as Godi, that is—priest and chief ; and Dunmail<sup>15</sup> the foolish was king of the Strathclyde Welsh, but Doka heeded him not at all.

Then went Doka and Aud to Blegendal, and at Gasford built a great hall nigh unto the kirk ; made of wood, sodded up a man's height on the outside for warmth and against fire. The roof was high pitched and thatched, with open beams and timbers, like a barn now-a-days, the gable end, which was the front of the building, span new with heavily carved boards ending in stags heads, and on the gable top the head of a bull ; the whole front, with the gallery that ran across it, carved and wrought with chisel after the Norse custom. In the middle of the floor were paved fire spots, over which hung a bell shaped way for the smoke, having a beam across its mouth called the rannal baulk. Alongside were lock beds, and high up on each side windows, below which hung weapons for war and chase ready for use, each man's arms over his own seat ; and below again were benches running along the walls

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\* Funeral feast,



*C.A.P. del.*

DOKA'S HALL AT GASFORD.

TO FACE P. 20.



with tables on trestles in front of them. In the middle of each side bench was a carved high seat, or settle, for the master, his wife, or honoured friend, and the main posts supporting the roof were also carved with figures of the old gods.

And Doka's men built other smaller skalar, spreading through the land until no man could look forth from his house without perceiving the smoke on his neighbour's howe ; but old Hauk went nigh unto Vasdal and built his homestead on a howe above the swamp of Irt, and died and was buried there. Others went further yet ; Ketil made his garth beyond the deep gill down which Kidbeck cometh to the great rock called Ketil's How,\* and Ottar's skali† was near the water end of the mere. So the old skali of Barna was called the Saeter-skali,<sup>16</sup> and men use the names Seaskail and Hawkbarrow yet ; but Gasford became the chief place of the Norsemen, and Doka lived at peace with the old priest, and helped him to build a better kirk, and so doing shewed himself both wise and strong.

Then, being at peace many winters, the Norsemen toiled, cutting sykes to drain the land, enclosing garths, clearing thwaites of wood and whin, and planting crops ; also they made a parrak in the neuk of the marsh for the cattle, on the land of Ragnvald,‡ but the sheep they drove up to the Saudrhaugr on the high land that men call yet Souty How. Ironstone

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\* Cat How and Guards. † Scale in Wasdale. ‡ Parknook.



they got from the scree and melted into blooms in furnaces near the Lund by the water end of Vasvatn, making a blast with bellows ; and when all the wood near was burned, they made other bloomeries by a little beck running into the Irt, where their slag heaps remain now in the place called Sindurdal.<sup>17</sup> And as they worked they sang the song of Skallagrim.

CHAPTER  
VIII. OF  
THE  
SECOND  
COMING OF  
CUARAN.

THREE winters after Brunanburh died great Athelstan, king of all England and overlord of Britain ; whose court was the most splendid in Europe, and to whom all worsted kings and war men fled for refuge ; and after him his brother Eadmund the Magnificent ruled the land, though but eighteen winters old. Then the Northumbrians delayed not, but belied their fealty oaths, sending bodes inviting "Olaf of Ireland" to be their ruler ; and to them quickly came Olaf Cuaran and Olaf Guthfrithson, with Ragnvald his brother, and sat them down at York, reigning together. And the year following was Guthfrithson slain at Tynningham, after which Cuaran and Ragnvald shared the kingdom, with the aid of Wulfstan, archbishop of York. With great slaughter stormed they Tamworth and got much booty, but Eadmund beset them in Leicester and would have taken Cuaran and Wulfstan had they not fled out of the town by night. Then did the two archbishops prevail upon the three kings to make a peace, and for



a time were they friends, and both Cuaran and Ragnvald were baptized in the presence of Eadmund. Yet but a little after, Eadmund being in the south, the two cousins made a raid into his lands; and Eadmund coming in anger with a great army subdued all Northumbria, so that Cuaran and Ragnvald were fain to don brogues and be off back to Dublin.

Thus did Olaf Cuaran reign in York a second time.

**O**NE year after Eadmund had subdued Northumbria, Dunmail the fool rebelled, and so brought war into Cumbria, and the king coming on

CHAPTER  
IX. OF  
DUNMAIL'S  
HREYST.

with his great army pushed Dunmail into the fells, and dividing his host, sent them by two ways to catch his enemy between them. The one part went by Logborgarthveit and Brekkumyr,\* and the other by Grasmirr, for each dale hath its mere; and there they conquered, raising a great heap of stones called Dunmail's hreyst to mark the place. Dunmail fled, and that he might not be known, cast the crown of Cumbria into Grisadal tarn, and thereafter were no more kings of Cumbria or Strathclyde. Then Eadmund harried the most part of Cumbria<sup>18</sup> to check the power of the Norsemen, and gave it all into the hands of Malcolm the king of Scots, on condition that he should be his ally. So were the Norsemen quit of the Angles and their kings, and free of their oaths,

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\* Legburthwaite—the clearing by the law hill.  
Brackmere—lake by the law hill—Thirlmere.

and Doka was chief man over all the country about Gasford, under Malcolm the Scottish king.

CHAPTER  
X. OF THE  
THIRD  
COMING OF  
CUARAN  
AND THE  
BATTLE OF  
STANE-  
MOOR.

**I**N the year after the harrying of Cumbria was King Eadmund murdered at Pucklechurch, on Augustine's mass day ; and Eadred his brother succeeded to the kingdom, and Wulfstan and all Northumbria swore fealty to him, and within a little space belied it all, taking Eric Bloodaxe, son of Fair-hair, for their king. Then did Eadred harry Northumbria and burn Ripon minster, and as he returned again the army of Eric overtook him and there was great slaughter. Then Eadred the king in great anger vowed he would utterly destroy the country, and the Northumbrians in fear cast out Eric ; who sailed away to Orkney, where the sons of Turf Einar ruled, and from thence went a-Viking.

Then came Olaf Cuaran hot foot to Avelinglas<sup>19</sup> from Ireland, where he was named Amhlaeibh, but the Strathclyde folk called him Abhloic, that is Aveloc, the Dane ; whereby some say that he was the King Avelin of whom the children of Avelinglas sang ; and Shelagh of the dark hair \* was Cuaran's daughter.

And Doka, meeting them at Avelinglas, sent Vikar† his son to guide them the bainest way over fells to York, where the Northumbrians greeted them with open arms, and Olaf became King of York for the third time under Eadred,

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\* Cuaran's mother was an Irish Princess.

† Modern form—Vickers.

King of England. Now Vikar Dokason had twenty and four winters, for he was born in the year of the Great Lights, and had one hand sore wounded by a wolf bite, so that men nicknamed him Tysson,\* son of Ty the Sword God, who had lost a hand in like manner.

Meanwhile, Eric Bloodaxe bided his time, gathering together friends and allies, with a great host, and when three winters had passed got word that the Northumbrians had risen against Olaf. Then landed Eric at Ellenburg, and ravaged along the road to York ; and Doka gathered men and sent them in haste, under the leadership of Vikar, by the passes of Harteknut and Reynishal† to warn King Olaf, who had been set there by Eadred for the warding of the land. Then Olaf with the Anglian folk under Oswulf, and a bcdy of Scots, and many Northmen from Cumbria drew together an army not to be withstood, and fell on Eric in a lonely place called Stein-mor, over which the great York road ran, and there was a great battle in which Vikar bore himself as a man. Many of the English folk fell, but ever whereas one fell came three in his place down from the land, and by the latter end of the day the fall of men turned toward the side of the invaders, and there died full many folk ; and ere this day was ended fell King Eric, by the hand of Maccus, Cuaran's son, and five kings with him, which are named

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\* Modern form—Tyson.

† Wrynose—pass of the rowan.

Guthorm, and his two sons Ivar and Harek . . . and Arnkel and Erland, the sons of Turf-Einar.<sup>20</sup> Yea, and there was an exceeding great fall of the Northmen, but they who escaped fared back and told Gunnhild, the wife of Eric.

Thus did Olaf Cuaran win the battle of Stanemoor for another man's weal, and Blood-axe and the five kings he buried on the field, setting over them a cross of stone, for Eric was a baptized man ; and this cross endured and is called Reycross yet. Then Eadred, now that the northern leaders had eaten up each the other, took advantage of the weakness of all the parties to put an end to the kingdom of Northumbria, deeming them too faithless to obey any ; and he set over them the Anglian Oswulf as Earl of Northumbria.

Olaf Cuaran in anger shook the dust of York from his brogues for ever, and started westward, for his foes held the Humber ; and as they passed by Ripon, Vikar came to him at the parting of the ways and said—

“ The southern road is thine, King Olaf, and I thy guide. In my father's country are friends, and in his hall shelter for thee and thine till times be better.”

And Olaf thinking well of it thanked him, and Vikar, aiding gladly for Shelagh's sake, took them by Kentdale, Reynishals, and Harte-knut ; and though the way was long it was happy, and they came in safety to Brautarhol-skelda,\* where Doka met them and conducted

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\* Butterilket = road—hill—spring.

them to Gasford, there to rest them until ships were ready at Avelinglas.

But that night Vikar spake to his father secretly.

THE night following, as they all sat at meat in the hall, Doka rose from the high seat holding a silver lipped horn, and pledged Olaf; and before all men asked for Shelagh in marriage with Vikar his son. But Olaf sat in silence for a space, for he loved Shelagh well, being the daughter of his first wife long time gone, and when he turned to look upon her she hid her face. Then Olaf the king arose, and held out his hand to Doka, saying—

CHAPTER  
XI. OF THE  
MARRIAGE  
OF  
SHELAGH  
AND THE  
DEATH OF  
DOKA.

“ Friend hast thou been to me, of my heart’s blood I give thee; let her sit in the bride’s seat and drink the bride cup, for the time is short.”

And the king sat down and covered his face, while the roof shook with the shouting of the company. Then the women dressed Shelagh in white, placing gold chains on her neck and fixing on each shoulder a large gilded brooch<sup>21</sup> ornamented with plaited silver wire and gems, that Barna had brought from Man, and through her dark hair they thrust long silver pins, joined by a string of Irt pearls, and led her to the bride’s seat. Then came Vikar, glorious in his battered mail, scarlet cloak, and winged helmet, and girded with his great bronze handled sword, bringing the bride cup to her,

and they drank thereof before them all. Then they bore her round the hall on their shoulders, and carried lights before her, and gave her into her husband's keeping.

So they two were wed ; and the next day Olaf blessed her, and took ship to Dublin, where he became king and reigned many winters. Now Cuaran was a baptized man, and he lies at Iona, by Columba's Kirk, and Shelagh also was a Christian maid.

The year following a son was born to her, a goodly child, and Vikar took him in his arms and poured water on his head,<sup>22</sup> calling him Griss, that is "the wild boar," the bravest animal that lives. But later Shelagh carried him in secret to the kirk, where the new priest, the old one being dead, took water brought from the well of the Holy St. Patrick which is nigh unto Kalda,<sup>23</sup> and baptized him ; and Shelagh prayed hard that Griss might be Christ's servant and a man of peace.

Now it is to be told when Griss had seen seven winters, that a great sickness broke out in London town and spread over the whole country ; and Doka, being on a journey to Penrith, sickened thereof and died, and his men buried him in haste, and raised a barrow over him near Ulfsvatn,\* calling it Dokra,† or, the place of Doka. So was there mourning in Gasford, and men drank silently at the arveol, and made Vikar, his son, Godi in his place. Then Vikar, having taken the oath, turned in

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\* Ullswater.    † Dockwray.

pity to his mother, who sat on the high seat refusing comfort. But Aud arose with an exceeding bitter cry, as of one without hope ; and, falling like one that has gotten her death stroke, died in the arms of Shelagh. Then many fled from the hall in fear of the great sickness.

Twelve winters after the arveol the whole earth shook, and rocks fell from the hills to the bane of many, so that all men feared. And Dunmail, sometime King of Cumbria, died on pilgrimage, and in the fall of the next year the long haired star appeared the third time, and the Norsemen were glad ; but the year following the crops failed and many folk died of famine, and men said the old gods were leaving them, and liked not the star. And the lad Griss heard many things from Vikar his father concerning the old gods, and from his mother of the White Christ, of whom the priest also spake, and knew not which was truth.

**I**T was well on in the back end when Eyvind came to Gasford. Eyvind the Skald, the rune writer, was son to Bard, who was son to Eyvind. Tall was he, white haired and blue eyed, pinched with hunger and lean, clad in a green kirtle well nigh in rags. Hardly had the storm battered keel that brought him, rowed by wasted men fleeing from the famine in Sudreyjar,\* won to Avelinglas ; whence Eyvind made his way to Vikar's

CHAPTER  
XII. OF  
EYVIND  
THE  
SKALD.

---

\* Hebrides.



hall, of which he had heard the Viking Palnatoki talk.

Palnatoki<sup>24</sup> the Viking, King of Jomsburg, had wedded Olöf, daughter of Stefnir of Stefnirgh,\* who ruled the land of Bekkjarmot † with the help of Griss, who was his foster son.

Shelagh, seeing Eyvind's sore state and the harp slung on his shoulder, pitied him, and bade the house carles prepare a bath,<sup>25</sup> and bring ale and meat. Then Eyvind, having bathed and eaten, told the tale of his heavy journey, and of the great famine in Sudreyjar, when men ate ravens and foxes, women and children died, snow fell at midsummer, and men threw old folk from the cliffs rather than see them suffer. At even he took his harp and sang, whereat all kept silence, marvelling at his voice and words ; for he sang the song of the Prophetess, of Odin, and the deeds of Thor and Tyr ; of Loki the evil one, Fenrir the wolf, and Jormungand the serpent ; of Surtur the flaming, and Ragnarok ; of the death of Baldur the beautiful, and of the good land that shall be. Then Shelagh, looking across at Vikar, said, " Let this man bide."

" Humph," muttered Bui by the fire, " When Eyvind sings no mouse must squeak."

So Eyvind stayed, and sang to them at the noontide rest, and ever at even in the hall, and in a little there was such a talk of the Skald of Gasford that men for ever came o' nights on

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\* Stepheney—Stefnir's dairy.

† Beckermot—mote hill by the beck.



some quest or other to Vikar's hall, and having got there stopped a bit, to hear him sing. Mayhap it was the Lay of the Wanderer, telling how Odin rode through the hall twined with serpents backs to learn the fate of Baldur ; or the Lay of Hymir the giant, and the fishing of Thor ; or of Ragnar who died laughing in the den of serpents, of the deeds of Ragnvald Olafsson, or of Fairhair. But when he told how Loki, bound and poisoned, shook the earth with his struggles, each man nudged his neighbour, and the women cried out in fear.

It fell out at the Jul feast when there was a great company, and men emptied a horn of ale to Odin and another to Christ for Shelagh's sake and the priest's, for there he was praising the singing and frowning at the tale, that Eyvind sang.

When the noise of the clapping was by, he sat fingering his harp seeking how he might best please the guests, and of a sudden broke into the Song of Brunanburh and the deeds of Barna. Scarce could folk wait for the end. Up leapt the men waving sword overhead, beating the tables with horns and shouting, Skoal to Eyvind ! Skoal to Bragi's\* son ! till the roofbeams rang, nor were the women backward. Then Vikar, calling Eyvind to the high seat, put a gold ring on his arm, bidding him bide in his hall for ever and a day, and again all shouted and approved.

So Eyvind stayed, and wandered on the fell

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\* Bragi, god of poetry.

making his own song, the Lay of Helge,  
which pleased folk more than all. For it  
stirred their blood as he lilted :—

Swiftly the men the awnings furled,  
So the king said,—the host awoke,  
Up to the yard the sail web whirled  
Ere on the deck the sunshine broke,  
Striped with the colours it always bore.  
Up to the mast-head the target ran,  
The woven target of war.  
Oars foaming thrash,  
War irons clash,  
For shield on shield with clattering rung,  
As the fleet ran out  
Mid the warriors shout,  
Far out from the land while the rowers sung,  
Keeping time, keeping time,  
Off the shore. <sup>26</sup>

But when summer was near the Skald grew  
restless and would be off, reason or no reason.  
All cried, “What ails ye man, bide here in  
comfort,” but got short answers, and high  
words might have come about had not Shelagh,  
finding him alone, coaxed him for the truth.  
Then Eyvind answered, “King’s daughter, I  
am happy in thy hall as a man may be, but—

“But,” quoth she.

“But in the north there is a fair maid whom  
I fain would seek.”

Then Shelagh wasted no more words, but  
spake unto Vikar, and in a little Griss and  
many more set Eyvind with good gifts on his  
road, bidding him soon return.

So Eyvind fared north in search of his dear,

and came not back ; but his lays lived in the hearts of the folk of Gasford, and were told over by the fire o' nights for long enough.

**I**T was near bed time on a hot, still day, in the second summer after the going of the Skald, when a hind, who had been sent out to look to a sick beast, ran into the hall white faced. "My," said he, "the sky's gey and queer."

CHAPTER XIII. OF THE DEATH OF CUARAN.

Vikar looked up, the man was all of a tremble.

"What boggle have you met now?" said the Godi.

"'Tis a fair fireflaucht ! I never saw aught to match it."

Griss\* rose and went out, and his shout brought the whole household to the door. Overhead the heavens shone with fiery light, casting quivering rays like unto spears of flame, and as the night darkened the colour ever deepened till it was like unto a lake of blood. As the hours wore on women huddled together, and men gazed and swore to hide their thoughts. Then a woman shrieked aloud—

"Surtur !" she cried, "Surtur's flaming sword ! What did Eyvind tell ? Is it not Surturday † ? The earth will burn and we shall all perish."

"Peace, fool," said Griss sternly, "if we die, we die."

"To live again," said Shelagh, and all gaped upon her. But the princess uplifted her

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\* Modern form—Grice.

† Surtur's day = Saturday.

voice and sang, first of Gimli, the land to be, of which Eyvind spake, and after that psalm verses taught her by the priest. Then she cast herself down and prayed aloud to the White Christ, and the muttering of the scared folk ceased. As the dawn began to break, the colour faded away, and all were comforted.<sup>27</sup>

"Is Christ stronger than the old gods?" asked Griss, as they went in.

"One thing's sure," said Vikar, "what with earth shakings, famines, long haired stars and fireflaughts, trouble's astir, and 'tis not far to seek. Go to thy mother lad. Can I, the Godi, say aught against the gods?"

Griss, knowing not what to make of this, was sorely troubled in mind; but before the day was out word came from the south of the foul murder of the young King Edward, and how Ethelred of evil counsel was made king of the English.

Against him the Danish folk came in ships, ravaging Cheshire. London town also was burned, the Danes having ever the upper hand because of the unreadiness of the king, and so great a fault it was that many of his own men turned against him. Yet in Cumbria there was peace, and much trading over sea.

That same year came a bode from Dublin to Gasford in evil case, for he told how that Cuaran of many fights had been attacked in his old age by the whole force of the Irishmen under Maelseachlinn.\* At Tara was the battle, great was the slaughter, and there died

---

\* King of Ireland.

valiantly Ragnvald, Cuaran's son, at the head of the Norsemen, whose power in Ireland was little after that fight. Then Olaf,<sup>28</sup> broken-hearted, sailed to Iona, and died there the year following. Now Shelagh mourned greatly for Ragnvald her brother, but was much comforted that her father died and was buried in holy ground, and Vikar hearing her laid it to heart.

The Danes having gone, Ethelred in his anger ravaged Rochester, so that the land was desolate ; and a grievous murrain arose among the cattle, spreading even to Cumbria. Griss had then come to man's estate, and had thirty winters ; and Vikar, fearing lest they should lose all the beasts, sacrificed a cade lamb\* where three lands meet, to Frey the god of plenty, which was a grief to Shelagh. The priest also was sad, saying it was the work of devils, and shewing a stone hard by the sacrifice on which was a cloven footmark, as when an ox steps in mud ; which men still show to travellers by the beck of the Kid.<sup>29</sup>

**N**OW Vikar, feeling his strength fail, talked much with Shelagh the princess, and she with tears told him all concerning Griss ; and Vikar comforted her, saying, "Star of my life, what thou hast done that will I stand by. Call Griss unto me."

And Griss coming, Vikar raised himself on the bed and said—

"My father, and my father's father lie afar off,

CHAPTER  
XIV. OF  
THE  
BURIAL OF  
VIKAR.

---

\* Pet lamb.

but I die among my own people. Lay me in the kirkgarth, for there will thy mother lie, and I would fain be beside her ; raise over me a Bauta Stein,\* and grave thereon the likeness of Thor with Miolnir his Hamner, whose light shone at my birthtide ; and a ship like unto that in which our fathers came hither. For the rest, though I as a Godi cannot lightly take a new religion, do as thy mother and the Christ priest will. Methinks he spoke truth ; and we shall yet see each the other ; and so, farewell."

Then Vikar turned his face to the wall and died ; and Griss wept aloud, but Shelagh prayed white-faced and dry-eyed, and rising sent a servant to the priest.

Then the priest, when he had heard the death words of Vikar, was glad at heart, and comforted them, saying many were saved at the eleventh hour ; and for a Bauta Stein bade them remember the cross in the kirkgarth of the Angles at Irtun,† whereon are patterns graven like to those in the book of the holy Cuthbert. And Griss, going forth, sent men to the hillside, who hewed a great red stone and brought it to the kirkgarth.

Now a great company came to the burial of Vikar, and marvelled that he should lie in the kirkgarth,<sup>30</sup> and agreed that one of their number should ask how this thing might be. And they put forward Bui the Thickhead. Then Griss spake in anger saying, "Am I not Lawman, and his son ?" and would have

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\* Memorial stone.

† An eighth century cross.





VIKAR'S CROSS.

TO FACE P. 37.



smitten Bui before them all had he not fled. But Shelagh, passing before Griss, dropped her veil and said—

“It is the dead man’s word and mine.”

So were all murmurs silenced, for the Norsemen revered the princess as a Vala\* ; and they buried Vikar by Mary’s kirk.

Then the priest took chalk and drew figures upon the stone. First, that they might obey the dying word, he drew a ship with mast and crow’s nest, and Thor standing therein having his hammer in the one hand, and in the other a line wherewith he fished ; and Hyme the giant also, with axe uplifted. Above and beneath this he marked out the great serpent Jormungand ; and all men thought well of it, knowing the tale of Thor’s bootless fishing told in the Lay of Hyme. Above this again the priest drew with cunning the Christ Lamb treading down that evil one the Serpent ; fashioning the head of the stone into a cross after the Irish manner, having a ring joining the arms ; and on the arms serpents, heads outward, as though fleeing from the holy sign. Again all agreed, though they understood not ; but Shelagh was content : for the carving spake openly to the wise—

“Though great Thor could not prevail against the Serpent, Christ doth bruise his head, and so give us Life Everlasting.”

In this sort was Vikar cross<sup>31</sup> hewn and set up ; and the Norsemen wondering, hearkened the more to Christ’s priest.

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\* Prophetess, wise woman.

CHAPTER  
XV. OF  
THE STAR  
OF THE  
LORD.

THE year after the burial of Vikar, the Danish army harried Ipswich, and King Ethelred being unable to resist, or unready, gave them ten thousand pounds of money to depart ; and to raise this money imposed a Land Tax called Danegeld, which all men paid save the Norsemen, who would not. For all this the Danes came again but two winters later ; and the year following came Olaf Tryggveson, King of Norway, plundering the south. Ethelred paid to him sixteen thousand pounds ; but the men of Gasford mocked at the tax saying, “ Why should we pay to our own kin ? ” So did all Norsemen that were spread over the country, for Cumbria was the middle of their world and Gasford a centre thereof. And Ethelred had great anger thereat.

Now it is to be told that in the autumn, the harvest having been got in and a great company drinking harvest ale in the hall, that Griss, looking forth from the doorway at even, saw again the long-haired star, and called his mother. Then Shelagh, coming forth with them all, gazed long at the star, as one that is fey ; that is, one that is fated to die soon, and whose words are truth ; and the crowd watched her silently. Then of a sudden, she spake—

“ It is the star of the Lord, that shone at his birth tide, sent to us for a Sign ! Hear ye all ! and hear thou, son of mine ! Yonder shines the star of the White Christ, the Prince of Peace.

It is he who has protected us so long. My prayers are heard. All thy life long thou hast been at peace. Have not all the lands reeked with slaughter and blood-shedding save thine? Have not London, York, Chester, and Bam-borough fallen? Whilst thou and thy house and kin have been at rest, and no foe at thy gates, nor toll paid to an exacting King. Behold the Lord's sign! Turn ye to Him."

Then the priest, who had come up with others, gravely took up the word—

"Fear not. Long have ye worshipped him in your hearts. Know ye not that Baldur the beautiful must come again? Did not Eyvind the skald sing in the song of your prophetess?

He shall doom pronounce  
And strifes allay  
Holy peace establish  
Which shall ever be.

He whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

Then the crowd shouted, heart stirred by the Christ speech of Shelagh their princess and prophetess, and by the cunning words of the priest; and Griss stood forth and said—

"Now will I be prime-signed." <sup>32</sup>

But Shelagh cried—

"It needs not! Thou wast baptized at birth! Thy father knew of it on his deathbed and forgave! Ask the priest."

Then the priest said that it was so, and the bystanders gazed at one another in wonder, for these were no common words. Griss recovering

from his amazement, dropped upon his knee, placing the hand of Shelagh on his head.

“Mother mine, thou didst well. Henceforward am I Christ’s man. But all men shall worship as they will for me.”

Now this word went throughout Cumbria, and men nodded their heads, for this was liberty to their liking ; and Cumbria had peace five winters, though North Wales was ravaged by the Danes.

CHAPTER  
XVI. OF  
THE WISE  
WOMAN.

**B**UI Thickhead lay hid in the woods, gnawing his fingers with rage and shame as he thought of the mocking laughter that had followed him as he ran from the hall. “To be chased out like a tod ! after doing the dirty work they were not fain to try on themselves ! spared because they thought him simple ! Well, happen the Thickhead had the tod’s cunning. They should rue it, Griss and the whole herd. He would bide his time and have a reckoning, that would he !”

He rose and went by bypaths to his dwelling. “What now ?” said the wife in wonder ; but he only growled like a wounded dog and cast him down.

“What ails thee, lad ?”

“I have been mocked of them all, and shamed.”

“Then get thee back and shame them. What, they are naught but men.”

After a bit he went, slinking in at the lower end of the hall, sitting among the thralls and drinking dourly of the arvale, heedless of their tongues.

“ ’Tis but a Thickhead ” said one at last.”

“ So is a club ” quoth he.

Thereat they gaped, and laughing, they knew not why, turned to their ale again.

So he bided his time for a year or more, putting a bold face on it till they wearied of miscalling him ; but every gibe left its sore spot, and made him harder set on revenge. Yet he did his bit with the rest, standing with his tongue in his cheek when Shelagh spake of the star, and shouting loudly with the others at the words of the priest. But the baptism of Griss about mazed him, and for days he glowered and muttered till his wife wept for his daftness. Then he flung out and away through the woods to the wise woman of Vasdal.

Thordis the witch was the mother of Brand, now the farmer of Vasdal skali, which is yet called Scale. Once she had been a busy housewife, but for many winters had troubled the farm little, save at night. Some said she was a bit nicked in the head since her daughter died ; others reckoned her man throve strangely well on a poor farm, and that fortune telling had been a good trade since the world began. Unkind folk called her a witch right out.

Thordis sat on the Lund How,\* which, as the name tells, was then covered by a thick wood, having on three sides Vasvatn and Irt, so that folk could scarce come at it save from one side, which she could see from her spyhole through

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\* At the foot of Wastwater.

the boughs, and so be ready for any. Hard by was a rude shelter of boughs and turf, with a cave hollowed out of the howe behind, and a vent for fire smoke. Across the mere came faint voices of men working at the bloomery, mingled with the splash of water; but these were safe to go their own gate and keep clear of such an uncanny spot. It was ill work to go without cause nigh one whom, folks said, could cross water without boat, ay, and go up screes by yon fearsome track that ends yonder on the cliff edge! Troll's work that surely, a path only a witch could follow. To this day their children call it "The devil's sled gate."

There was a stir among the boughs beyond the slack, and through the bushes came a man, torn with briars, and mud splashed breast high. The witch grinned as she saw him.

"He comes in secret and has got mired passing over nigh the tarn. The way of the witless was aye a weary trod. Happen I shall get even with the Christ woman now."

For Thordis knew Bui's story well, as she did most things, and had small love for Shelagh or any followers of new gods: so, as he won panting up the howe, and humbly passed the time of day, she nodded and said—

"Was there no bainer gate, Thickhead? What do you seek? A charm for warts, or does so comely a man desire a love drink?"

Now Bui was afraid, for he had not thought of being known; but he answered stoutly—

"Mock me not, dame. I am none so thick

as to come by the open way ; or for such bairns work. My enemy has hurt me ; but he is stronger than I, and I would have help."

"A spell!" croaked Thordis, "a spell to take away his wits and shame him? Think of it, Thickhead."

"Ay," answered Bui fiercely.

"Naught for naught," said she, holding out her hand ; "give me thy ring."

Now this was but a shrewd guess on the part of Thordis, but the knees of Bui shook under him for fear ; for it so chanced that he had a ring that he had taken from a drowned man's arm, and carried in his poke lest it should be known. Trembling he drew it out, and gave into her hand. A wise woman this indeed, who knew all things. She grabbed it and darted behind the skin that hung before the cave, where he heard her crooning and stirring up the fire. After a bit she came out with a holed stone in her hand, such as folk put in the byre to keep the cattle quiet o' nights, and this she bade him hang round his neck and look through it when he got the chance at his enemy ; so should the spell come upon him.

"Am I to do aught else?" he asked.

"Wait for trouble, fool. Do men harvest in winter? When the storm blows, then wilt thou push down his roof posts. Watch for a sign ; and now be off with thee, lest the spell turn." Then Bui ran down the howe and looked not back, being very much afraid. But the witch



rocked herself and laughed, for this was an egg that would hatch out.

So Bui won home and watched for a sign, and in a little all men went to a Thing at Gillibanc.

"What's astir now" said Bui, "well this caps a'."

CHAPTER  
XVII. OF  
THE THING  
AT  
GILLIBANC.

WHEN a thousand winters had passed since the birthtide the Danish army went to Normandy, and Ethelred, who hated all Northmen, thought to revenge himself on those settled in Cumbria; coming with an army from York by Appleby to Penrith, and the land of Carlisle, killing, burning, and plundering.<sup>33</sup> The Norsemen of those parts could do little, being taken un-awares, but some fleeing over fells brought word to Griss, how that the king had vowed to ravage all Cumbria, and that his ships were to meet him at Avelinglas.

Then Griss, knowing the danger was great, sent horsemen throughout the land, bidding them ride all night, even to Hamalsset,\* Thorstein's Vatn,† Borgartun,‡ and Mealholm, and north to Egenermot, bearing the burnt arrows which called all men to a Thing; not at the Althing at Logborgarthveit,§ or at Fellfoot in Langidal as was customary; but at Gillibanc nigh unto Gasford, the point of danger. For at Gasford there is a little round hill in the midst

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\* Hamal's seat—Ambleside.

† Thurstan's water—Coniston water.

‡ Town of the fort—Broughton-in-Furness. § Legburthwaite.



of the plain, from whence one may see the whole country, and easy to come at, being hard by the Rome road and of a fitting shape for a Thingstead. And it was the land of Thyрни the gillie, that is, the servant of Griss; and the name thereof is yet but little changed to Gallabanks, and the homestead near by to Thornbanc.

Now there came to Gillibanc on the third morn after the sending of the bodes, Rognvald Ormson, whose fore-elder was Avelin of the glas, Viberg Vibergson from the thwaite by Esk,\* and Korní from the fell, with their neighbour Siward from Langlifergh,† the last in a great way about his young wife Langlif. To them came Hamal from the head of the great mere, Hallbiorn from his oatfields on the Mealholm,‡ Ailward from Borgartun, Thurstan from Konungstun, and Arnold Ulfson from Duddon.§ Bardi Haukson was there from his barrow in Vasdal; Gudda from Guddathveit,|| Stefnir from Stefenergh¶; and Hundi from his home among the rowans men still call Reynira\*\*; with a host of folk from Bekkjarmot and the Egen, and from every thwaite and garth and setr of the Norsemen. Also came Wulfrid from Irtun, with other Angles, to bear a hand with their neighbours.

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\* Viberg's clearing—Waberthwaite.

† Langlif's dairy—Langley Park.

‡ Part of Millom is still called Holborn Hill.

§ Ulpha. ¶ Stepheney.

|| Gudda, short for Gudröd—Godderthwaite.

\*\* The nook of rowans—Rainors.

On the top of Gillibanc men made a ring of posts joined by hazelwands, and hallowed it with the blood of a ram. In the midst thereof stood Griss the Lawman, and by the ring the chief men sat on turf seats, while beyond the Thingbrink stood men in great number; and Griss told them all of Ethelred's purposing, and said—

“Now let all men speak. Sorrow gnaws the heart of him who hath no one to advise with but himself. One's own home is the best home, be it never so small. What say ye? Will ye flee into the fells and hide, or will ye guard what is yours?”

Then some said it was cold comfort on the fell, and others that it was nithing work to sit and watch the land destroyed. Then spoke Rognvald, having sore work to keep his peace strings<sup>34</sup> fast, and quoth he—

“Friends, I hide from no man. Never was I born for blenching.”

And Viberg said—

“The sleeping wolf gains not the prey; neither the drowsy man the victory. Once alone do men die, and from that season shall none escape; so my rede it is that we flee no whither, but do the work of our hands in as manly wise as we may. Guard ye the banks of Egen and push the king to the sea, and we will see to his ships.”

Then said Stefnir the Kemp\*—

“Would that Palnatoki were here with his

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\* Warrior.

Jomsburgers, each of them a match for two men. The wolves would not lack meat."

"Peace, old grumbler," answered Griss, "a man is his own best friend, and we have stout sword swingers."

"Unproven," growled the old man.

But a great shout arose and clashing of shields, and so was the Thing decided.

**V**IBERG Vibergson drew Griss aside, CHAPTER and called Rognvald and Hamal, and XVIII. they four made a plan ; and Hamal OF THE departed to his own place, saying that TREACHERY his men were few, but that he would watch the OF BUI. passes and send tidings.

Then Griss took most part of the host and made camp at Caernarfon, which is Bekkjar-mot,<sup>35</sup> and guarded the banks of Egen ; and the women folk of those spots were sore put to it bringing food and drink to the army. And many friendships came about between these maids and men, so that, when all the trouble was by, there were many handfastings, and much bride ale ; and it is yet a saying "to gang together like the lads of Derigh and the lasses of Bekkjamot."

But Viberg and Rognvald returned to Avelinglas, where Rognvald sank two ships laden with stones in the mouth of the fiord. And all their company cut down trees by the river's edge so that they fell into the water, and being floated down to the sunken ships were bound thereto with ropes and chains, until a great boom lay across the water that no vessel might

pass. Scarce two days after all was done the ships of Ethelred came from Chester, and could not come into the harbour for the boom; and those that came near to it lost many men hurt with arrows, and so rowed back again. So the fleet went to the Isle of Man, seeing nought of the army of Ethelred.

“Now” said Bui Thickhead, “the storm blows”; and stealing away from Caernarfon by night, he came to the camp of Ethelred by Derwent, and told how the Norsemen held Egen. But Thickhead knew not of the blocking of the fiord. Then Ethelred the king, liking not the tale, and being in two minds, turned back to find another way. Bui asked for a gift, but the king, having had much traffic in traitors, bade his men scourge him from among them, and they laying on willingly, Bui fled screaming, and being driven into a mire, perished.

And that was the end of Thickhead.

Then Griss, hearing of the treachery of Bui, and how well it had served the Norsemen, sent away Ailward and Thurstan with their men, with word to assemble at Dunnardal heved\*; but he himself stayed for a time lest Ethelred should return, until a bode came saying the king made for Ketelsvegg.† Then hastened Griss with all the army through Gasford, where Shelagh and the women came out in silent sorrow to watch the passing of them. But Griss stood and cried—

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\* Dale Head in Ulpha.

† Ketil's wall—Keswick.

“Be of good cheer, king’s daughter; for surely we shall try the matter and prevail without violence, and come again to thee.”

So went they on by Eshdal to Brautarholtskelda, and lay all night by the Norse homestead there; and at dawn climbed the pass of Harteknut and lay in wait a little to the hither side of the top. Griss, Rognvald, and Viberg watched on the head of the pass; sending two men over fell to Dunnardal heved. For they knew the king must journey to Hamalsset, and come by the Rome road to Avelinglas.

As they waited for the dawn Rognvald laughed in his beard, and said—

“We keep the Hvitsuntid.”

And Viberg answered—

“Never was it better kept. Balder comes. Watch we for the rising of the White Sun God, that he may give us our wish; so shall we prevail.”

“My mother,” said Griss, as one that speaks to himself, “holdeth that Balder the Beautiful is the White Christ, and that he only can give victory.”

“Then have we both gods,” quoth Rognvald, “and with their aid we shall do that to-day that shall make our young folk keen to keep Hvitsuntid for long enough.”

And these words were truth, for the lads and maids of Gasford do yet go out to meet the sunrise on the Whitsuntide; not knowing that it was the feast of Balder, the White Sun God.<sup>36</sup>

CHAPTER  
XIX.  
OF THE  
CONFOUND-  
ING OF  
ETHELRED.

NOW it is to be told that Hamal, hearing of the coming of Ethelred, minded him of the words of Griss, though it was to his own hurt, and thus won him great honour of all men. Having sent away his women folk and children to the woods about Eshthveit Vatn, he left Hamalsset empty, and lay with his men on the fell nigh to Arnasidha\*, whence they might unperceived watch the way of Ethelred; and that night there came hot foot to his aid Hákon with the men of Hákonarset.†

Ethelred commanded each man to gather food for two days at Ketelsvegg, and coming over Dunmail'shreyst lay all that night at Hamalsset, but fearing a snare, set out early on the morrow, meaning to come at Avelinglas the same even; and the men of Hamal and Hákon watched them go, until the army had altogether passed over Reynishals into the dale of Korkahlith.‡ Then they too hastened up the pass and halted among the rowan trees.

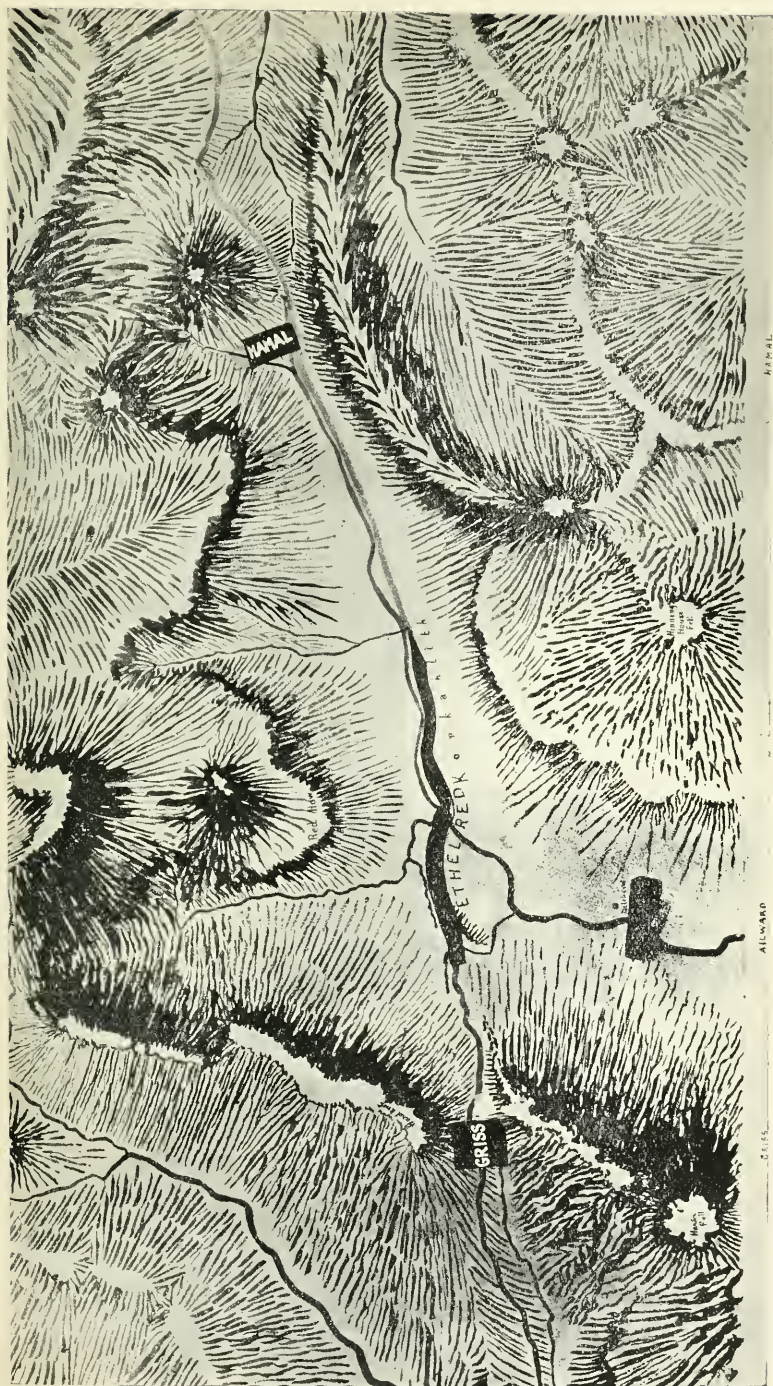
Korkahlith lieth at the head of Duddon, and is the lonest of all the dales, having only one opening, through which little Duddon flows, and that rugged and unfit for passage. The Rome road from Hamalsset to Avelinglas cometh in on the east over the pass of Reynishals, and dipping deeply down crosseth the dale, going out on the west over the brant pass of Harteknut.

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\* High Arnside.      † Hákon's claim—Hawkshead.

‡ Oats-fellside—Cockley Beck.





C.A.P. del.

COCKLEY BECK.

TO FACE P. 50.





The army of Ethelred scuffled up this last with toil, lorrying behind one another, for the trod was narrow ; and the king riding in front unthinking, and coming nigh unto the top, saw three great men armed, standing across the way, who shouted, desiring speech with him. Then Ethelred rode forward with one or two on foot, and demanded who they might be; and one answered—

“Griss Vikarson hight am I, Lawman of Gasford ; and I come to bid thee pause.”

“And I am Ethelred of England, and this is my army behind me. Stand out of the road.”

Then Griss waved his arm, and up leaped on the pass head the whole army of the Norsemen ; whereat Ethelred recoiled, turning toward his men, and Griss might have slain him out of hand, but for the teaching of Shelagh.

“Keep back thy men Ethelred, or thou diest, even now ! Hearken O king ! Here stand we for our wives, our children, and our lands, to guard them from thee and thy doing. This way is not for thee.”

Then Ethelred blazed out with sudden anger—

“Fool ! Even now my ships are at Avelinglas and ravaging thy country. I will cut my way through thy men, and thee will I hew in pieces.”

“Brave words,” answered Griss, taking a banner-bearing spear from one of Ethelred’s companions, who gave it up quietly enough, not liking the look of Rognvald’s bare blade.

“Will the king look to the west,” he added, pointing with the spear toward the sea, while Viberg and Rognvald covered him with ready swords. And the king looking, saw with anger and astonishment the Isle of Man shewing clearly, and many dark specks on the water.

“Yonder go thy ships, Ethelred, never to come back. Thinkest thou the Viking’s sons could not guard their fiord, and keep the land that is theirs? Look to the south if thou wilt!”

Then the king, turning toward Duddon, gnashed his teeth with rage, for across the outlet of the dale stood in great number the men of Borgartun and Konungstun, with Ailward and Thurstan at their head.

“And now behind thee,” and Griss pointed toward Reynishals, and lo! on the pass was a glitter of arms as of a great host. The men of Hamal and Hákon had drawn up in line, and made a brave show, though not many in number. Then the craven heart of Ethelred was humbled, for he was caught as a deer in a net, and he spoke the Norsemen fair.

But Griss answered sternly—

“Back by the way that thou camest. Yonder lies the road to York. The men of Hamalsset will go before and we will follow after thee, for we trust thee not. We desire not thy blood or thy gold. But mark! if I raise this spear, then Viberg blows his ludrhorn,\* and my servant on yonder fell top will wave his garment. Then O king, art thou beset on three

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\* Signal of attack.

sides, we having the advantage of the ground. Methinks many of thy men will tread the path to Hel, and thou among the first. Haste, while the way is open ! ”

Thus was Ethelred confounded, and went his way back to York, the Norsemen shepherding him to the utmost limits of their country ; and thus was the land of Gasford saved.

**W**HEN the Norsemen returned to CHAPTER  
Hamalsset they found it little the XX. OF THE  
worse, and every man went to his RETURN TO  
own home. Griss bearing the banner GASFORD.

of Ethelred in his hand, came to Avelinglas, where a great feast was held in the hall at even ; and on the morrow, all having first been to see the boom, Viberg and Rognvald with a great following, set Griss to his hall. And as they drew nigh, all the womenfolk and children came in haste to meet them, and wondered with laughter and tears to see all safe and unhurt ; and Griss, kneeling, gave the banner into the hand of his mother, and told the tale in few words. But Rognvald, breaking in, spake of all the deeds of Griss, and how his counsel had saved the land ; and all fell to making much of him, shouting and clashing their arms till Blegen fell resounded.

Then Shelagh, handing the banner to a house carle, called on them to kneel, and all baptized men dropped down at once. Viberg and Rognvald followed out of love and fellowship for Griss ; and after a little pause so did the whole company. Now this thing was

accounted a marvel, unheard of among the Norsemen, that a host should kneel at a woman's word. But Shelagh tossed her arms toward Heaven and cried aloud—

“ Praised be Christ ! Who hath brought ye all again in peace and taken away my fear. His is the victory ; to Him be the glory. Now Lord, if Thou wilt, let Thy servant depart.”

Then the priest wept for joy. But a great awe fell upon all the company, and many turned to the Lord and were baptized, Viberg and Rognvald with them, having heard the tale of the star and the words of Shelagh. And men say that the carven stones in the kirkgarths of Meolcastre\* and Vibergsthveit were crosses, set up as the gravemarks of Rognvald and Viberg. For on the one is a horse struggling in bonds as in a net, and on both many bonds and entanglements like unto those that bound the boom, but this is as it may be.

Thereafter Shelagh moved among her people doing good works but saying little ; only she sent for the wife of Bui and comforted her ; and one morn it happened that her women found her still and cold, with her hands clasped and a strange light upon her face. With much weeping the folk of Gasford carried Shelagh to the kirkgarth, and laid her hard by Vikar her man, and great numbers came to the burial and worshipped with sorrow in their hearts ; and among them was Sigtrygg Silkbeard, her half brother, a mighty man and comely.

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\* Muncaster.

**G**RISS sent men to the hillside, who CHAPTER  
hewed therefrom a great stone nigh XXI.  
six yards in length, and with much OF THE  
toil brought it on rollers to Mary's BLESSING  
kirk. Now it chanced that among the folk OF  
who had come from Ireland with Silkbeard SHELAGH'S  
there was a Norseman hight Soror, a cunning CROSS.  
stone smith, and a follower of the old gods,  
who had fought with those who in that land  
hewed crosses having ring-heads; and aforetime  
was with Olaf Cuaran in Mercia, where the  
round shafts grow square; and this man loving  
his craft, had looked upon them knowingly.

Then said Silkbeard to Griss, "There is one  
with me who will do this work for thee well."  
Griss sent for Soror, and bade him make a  
cross goodlier than them all if he would have a  
great gift. The thing pleased Soror, so that he  
wrought long on the stone with pick and drill  
and chisel, until he had fashioned it with care  
into a cross tall and slender like to her that  
was gone: having a wheel-head bearing signs  
of the Holy Three after the Irish manner; and  
a shaft round below and square above; and the  
figures graven thereon taken from the tales of  
the old gods of the Norsemen. On it the  
Christ faith of Shelagh was plainly to be seen  
of all men, both in the cross-head, and in  
figures on the shaft of a Crucified One pierced  
with a spear, and of a soldier and the Magdalen  
standing thereby, and many other holy things.  
But, as always will be when faiths are chang-  
ing, the new creed was declared through the

symbols of the old ; for a people cannot change religion in a day, a month, or a year ; and if one man change his faith he doth not change the thoughts that have been within him from his youth up, and he understandeth not a new god unless it be shewn to him in a familiar dress. So, when an old faith overlappeth a new, it may be a hundred years, or more, ere the symbols be changed, and this hath always been so.

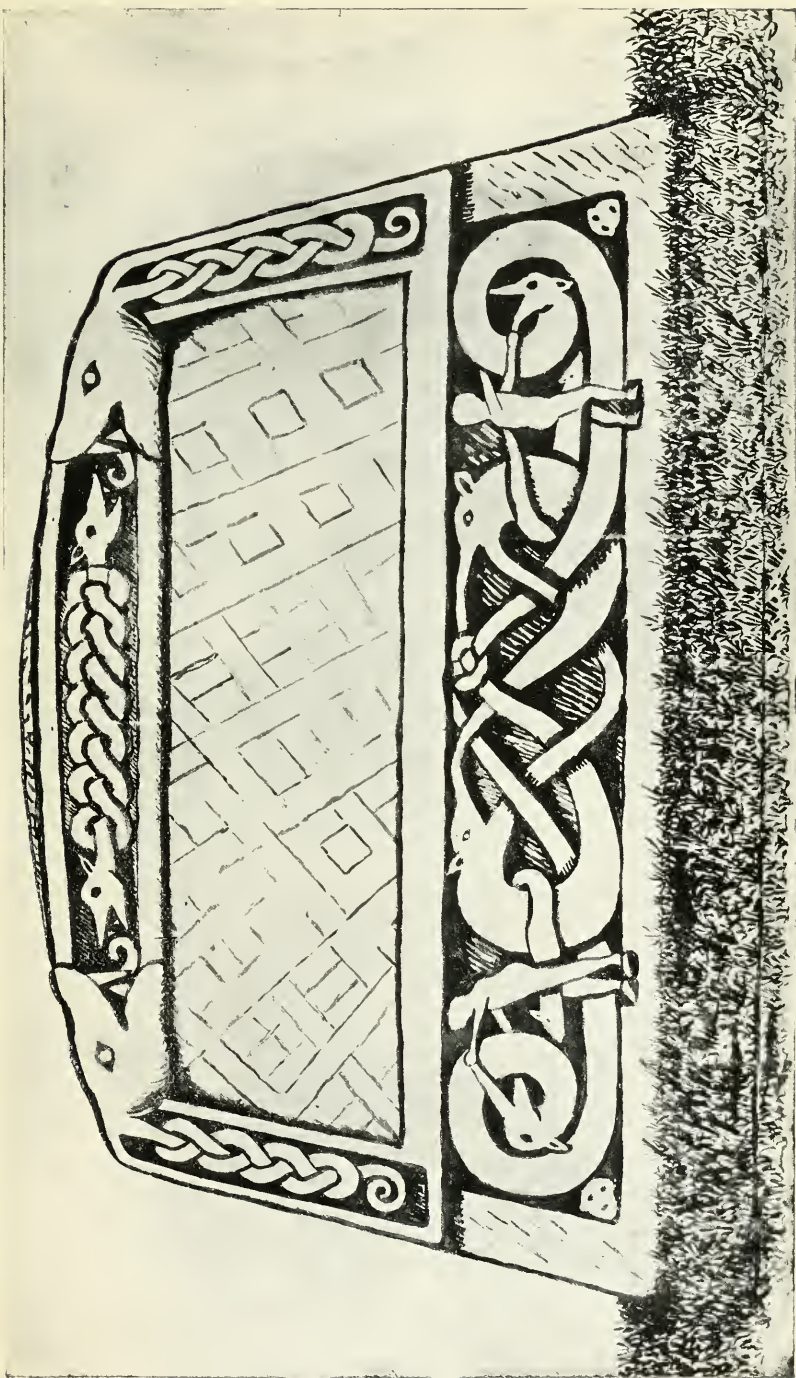
Over the spot where Vikar and Shelagh lay Griss placed a large and heavy stone, shaped like the hall in which they lived, having high pitched roof with thongs binding down the thatch : and on the side of the hall was to be seen, carven three times over, the struggle between Vidar\* and the wolf-serpent, the warfare between Good and Evil. On the ridge of the roof were dragons, and at each end of the ridge the great head of a monstrous serpent, most horrible with all-devouring open mouth and savage teeth. But these hell hounds gaped around the tomb in vain, for on each end of the hall was the figure of the Crucified Redeemer of Souls.

Then men brought a great block of stone, four square, having three steps all round, and a hole pierced in the midst, and set it firmly in the earth at the head of Shelagh's resting place ; and with much labour and care, with pulling of ropes padded with straw, and straining of levers, was Shelagh's cross slowly heaved up, until it stood straight in the block pointing

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\* Son of Odin the All Father.









to heaven. And there it standeth to this day.

Now that day was Surtur's day, that endeth the week, as Surtur was thought to end all things at the twilight of the old gods. And the priest said it was a fit day for ending the old beliefs, bidding them all come to the kirk on the morrow, to the blessing of the cross of Shelagh.

On the morrow, being the Lord's Day, a multitude of folk, both men and women, came to the kirkgarth of Mary. Then the priest, closing the kirk door, prayed aloud by the crosses, and afterwards preached unto all, shewing that the figure that seemed to them Balder stabbed by Hodur with the fatal mistletoe, was Christ pierced in the side by the spear of a soldier ; that the woman standing by bruised the head of the serpent with her heel as foretold in the Holy Book ; that Vidar, son of Allfather Odin, rending the wolf's jaw, was God the Son conquering the jaws of Hell ; that Heimdall the horn bearing sentinel keeping back the wolves was Christ the Guardian and Shepherd of His flock ; that Loki bound to the rock was the Devil defeated and chained ; and that the horseman head downward was Death on the pale horse overthrown and robbed of his victory. Many other words he spake, and called upon them fervently with tears to be all of one mind and to be baptized with Christ, shewing with cunning and force how that it was "far better," and telling how, as Vikar and Shelagh lay side by side all

would meet their loved ones in Christ's kingdom ; whereas the old belief promised no such happiness.

And his words prevailed ; for the women wept aloud and besought their menfolk, saying that there was no place for them in Valhalla, and the Norsemen accepted the White Christ, and in time forgot the old gods.

Thus was Shelagh cross set up, and so did the Christ faith come to our fore elders.

But Soror changed not, having no wife. And Griss gave him gifts and land to live on, and when he died men buried him on his own howe, and set a stone over him called Soror's stone\* ; and the land near was called the rigg of the Kemp's howe,† after so great a fighter.

CHAPTER  
XXII.  
OF THE  
GRAVE  
MARK OF  
GRISS.

THE year after Shelagh's death did Ethelred of Evil Counsel the most base and foolish act of his life, secretly commanding all the Danes settled in Wessex to be treacherously murdered in the night. And this was done, on the Mass Day of St. Brice, on man, woman, and child alike ; even on Gunnhild, sister of Svein, King of Norway ; who, with the fierce courage of the Northfolk, cried defiantly to her murderers, " My brother will drown your country in blood," and so speaking died.<sup>37</sup>

The summer following, Svein her brother nailed the bracelet of his murdered sister to the

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\* Sorrowstone.    † Kemplerigg.

mast of the "Sea Dragon" and came over sea, with revenge in his heart and power in his right hand, laying waste the land with fire and sword, so that there was a great famine such as no man had seen. Again and again did he come, until he gained the whole country, and drove Ethelred from the kingdom.

After the death of Svein, Evil Counsel came once more with a host, ravaging the country to no purpose. In that year were long continued rains,\* and becks ran over full; and on the eve of Michael's Mass a strong wind arose and a great sea flood, running so far up as it never before had done. Thus Avelinglas and other low lying spots were drowned, with the loss of many folks lives and spoiling of much good gear; but when the flood was gone the folk of Avelinglas saw that the sunken ships were washed away and the mouth of the haven cleared.

Then came Knut Sveinsson and carried on the war until Ethelred died, but these fights troubled not the folk of Gasford.

After these things were done Griss called his sons to him, knowing that his end was near, and said—

"Hold fast by the Christ faith, and remember the words of Shelagh my mother; meddle not with other men's concerns, but be ready to guard thine own, being no niddersers."

"Be kindly to friend and kin, and reward not their trespasses against thee; bear and

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\* Ingulf.

forbear, and win for thee thereby long enduring praise of men."

"Spare always a fallen foe, take not a poor man's purse, or a brave man's sword, but when thou smitest, smite home."

"Weep not when I am laid low, for in the Christ land shall we meet."

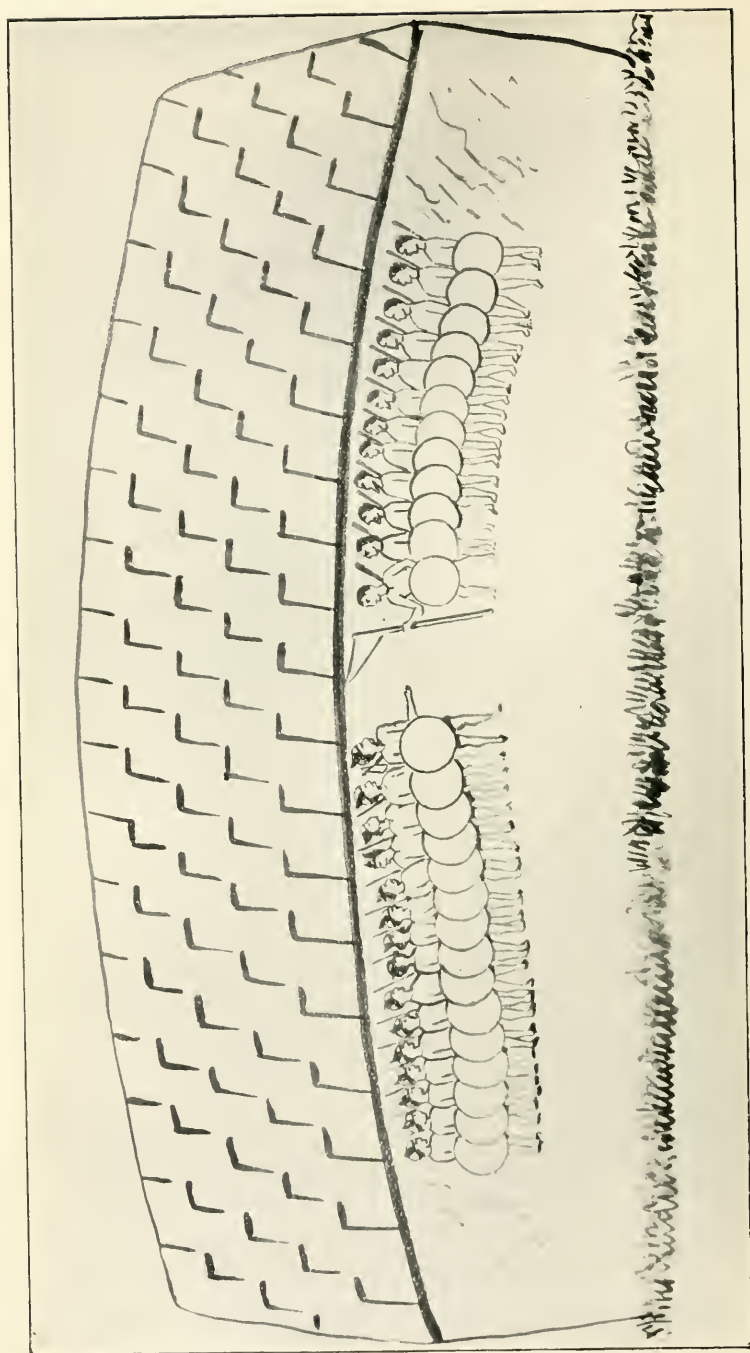
And Griss died in peace as he had lived, nineteen winters after the burial of Shelagh, being held in honour of all men, and of a good age; and his house endured, and his children hold the land, and shall do. And his sons carried him to the kirkgarth of Mary at Gasford, and laid him on the south side of the grave of his father and mother, at about five paces distance, and the priest prayed over him.

At the arveol, Viberg sat on the high seat in the hall, whitebearded and hoary; and rising with cup in hand, called on all present to drink to the memory of the dead. This being done in silence, Viberg said—

"Friends, he that is gone, is gone; but ye knew him and his deeds, and how his counsel saved the land. Soon shall we lie as he lies, and dead men are soon forgotten. Too old am I to sing his praises; but my rede is, that so great a man should have a fitting gravemark, that those who come hereafter may know the resting place of a hero. I have said."

And as the old warrior sank back on the high seat, all men thought his words good, and there was much talking and counselling until the matter was decided.





TO FACE P. 61.

THE GRAVE-MARK OF GRISS.

Drawing by C.A.P.

So it came about that men went to the hillside a third time, and Soror made a Grisar cross<sup>88</sup> like unto Shelagh cross, having a head and shaft of the same fashion, and horsemen graven thereon: and there were no such crosses set up by the Norsemen either before or after, save those that Soror made for Owein at Penrith, being nigh five yards in height and cunningly wrought.

For a grave cover they placed a heavy stone, house shaped like unto the former tomb, but less in height and having the roof tiled: and on the one side were graven many rings, fitting for the tomb of a chief "the ring giver," and many bonds and interlacings. On the far side were shewn the doings on Harteknut, for one might plainly see the army of the Norsemen with winged helmets, round shields, and spears held up; and at their head Griss taking the banner from the hand of Ethelred, whose army stand bareheaded behind him with lowered spear points. On the end of the house was the figure of Griss himself, habited as he lived in tunic and belt, and bearing a taperaxe in his hand.

And thus they left him sleeping.

But old Viberg lingered by the tomb of his friend, loth to leave. And the sun went down into the sea among glowing clouds, set in a pale green sky; and as the daylight failed, the moon rising above the Screes bathed the three crosses in silver radiance. Then Viberg, gazing thereon, thought of the scene on Calvary, and

the promise of Glory, and kneeling by the tomb bowed his head in prayer ; and the Peace of God came unto him.

And overhead shone the Evening Star.

SO ENDS THE STORY OF SHELAGH.



TABLE OF THE CHRONOLOGY.  
NOTES TO THE STORY.



## CHRONOLOGY.

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A.D.

- c. 835.—Ireland first colonised by Northmen.
- 863.—Accession of Harald Fairhair.
- c. 887.—Battle of Hafsfirth.
- 890.—*Birth of Doka. The flight from Man to Cumbria.*
- 892.—Comet, in May.
- 905.—Comet, October 20th. *Doka visits Gasford and Vasdal.*
- 912.—Birth of Olaf Cuaran.
- 924.—*Marriage of Doka.* Commendation of Scotland and Strathclyde to Edward.
- 926.—Great Aurora. Sigtrygg dies. Athelstan takes York. Peace of Dacor. *Birth of Vikar.*
- 927.—Guthfrith O'Ivar and Olaf Cuaran take York. Expelled by Athelstan.
- 931-2.—Olaf Cuaran marries Constantine's daughter.
- 933.—Athelstan ravages Scotland.
- 937.—Battle of Brunanburh. *Death of Barna.*
- 938.—*Norse settlement at Gasford.*
- 940.—Death of Athelstan.
- 941.—Olaf Guthfrithson and Olaf Cuaran take York.
- 942.—Death of Guthfrithson. Cuaran King of York.
- 944-5.—Olaf Cuaran expelled by Eadmund, and becomes King of Dublin.
- 945.—Battle of Dunmailraise. Cumbria granted to Malcolm.
- 946.—Eadmund dies.
- 947.—Eric Bloodaxe King of York.
- 948.—Eric Bloodaxe expelled by Northumbrians.
- 949.—Olaf Cuaran King of York.
- c. 952.—Battle of Stanemoor. *Marriage of Shelagh.*
- c. 953.—*Birth of Griss.*

- 955.—Cuaran King of Dublin.  
 962.—Plague. *Deaths of Doka and Aud.*  
 966.—Thored Gunnarson harries Westmorland.  
 974.—Earthquake.  
 975.—Comet, in the autumn.  
 976.—Famine.  
 977.—*Eyvind comes to Gasford.*  
 979.—Battle of Tara. Accession of Ethelred II.  
     Aurora.  
 981.—Olaf Cuaran dies.  
 982.—London burnt by Danes.  
 986.—Murrain in cattle.  
 990.—*Death of Vikar. Vikar's cross erected.*  
 991.—Danegeld imposed.  
 995.—Comet.  
 996.—*Bui consults the Wise Woman.*  
 1000.—Ethelred ravages Cumberland.  
 1001.—*Death of Shelagh. Erection of Shelagh's cross.*  
 1002.—Massacre of the Danes.  
 1003.—Invasion of Svein.  
 1014.—Death of Svein. The great high tide.  
 1016.—April 23rd. Death of Ethelred.  
 1020.—*Death of Griss. Erection of Griss cross.*

## NOTES TO THE STORY.

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(<sup>1</sup>) p. 2.—*Union of the Scandinavian kingdoms.* Harald succeeded in a task which had been the aim not only of his father Halfdan, but of the chief rulers of their country for three centuries.

(<sup>2</sup>) p. 4.—*Herdwick sheep.* The Norsemen left Man "with all their goods and belongings," which would include live stock. Not only are the Herdwicks especially hardy, as northern sheep might be expected to be, but the terms gimmer, hogg, twinter, thrinter, rake, the sheep marks, and sheep laws, are all Norse in origin. (Rev. T. Ellwood).

(<sup>3</sup>) p. 5.—*Current*. The current sets northward along the Cumberland coast, so that the debris of a wreck off North Wales drifts ashore near Seascale.

(<sup>4</sup>) p. 6.—*Trees*. The Cumberland coast was densely wooded so late as 1660.

(<sup>5</sup>) p. 7.—*Urn*. An urn containing burnt bones was dug up on the Herdy Neb about 1870. Part of it is still in existence.

(<sup>6</sup>) p. 8.—*Lawman*. The Lawman or Godi was military chief, high priest, and speaker of the law, that is practically judge, at the Thing, which was an assembly of the freemen of the district. (Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*).

(<sup>7</sup>) p. 9.—*Graystones*. One stone remains. Eleven were buried by the tenant about 1820. There is a field of the same name close to the village of Gosforth.

At Lakinghow, up to 1850, the country people used to assemble on the third Sunday in Lent, to play football, and booths were set up as at a fair.

(<sup>8</sup>) p. 10.—*Cumbria*. Although Strathclyde once extended to the Mersey, the southern boundary of Cumbria may be defined by a line drawn west from Keswick, and the Lake Country was at the time the Norsemen came practically a no man's land (Collingwood). If the Ravenglass harbour was held, which the Vikings sons were sure to do, the district round Gosforth, fenced in by a tangle of mountains, was safe from southern attack, and seems to have escaped all the harryings by Eadward, Athelstan, Eadmund, Thored Gunnarsson, and Ethelred.

(<sup>9</sup>) p. 10.—*The Angles Christian*. "With the death of Penda in 659, at the battle of the Winweed, all active resistance on the part of the old heathendom came to an end, and by 670 Northumbria was Christianized." (Green's *Making of England*).

(<sup>10</sup>) p. 13.—*Aud*. This name appears to be preserved in Austhwaite in Eskdale, Aud's thwaite.

(<sup>11</sup>) p. 13.—*Submission of the North to Eadward*. Known as the Commendation of Scotland and Strath-

clyde. This, together with its ratification to Athelstan at the peace of Dacor, was probably a ruse on the part of the Northern Kings to gain time, and must not be taken too seriously as feudalism. Yet it was the foundation of the claims of Edward I. to the Scottish throne.

(<sup>12</sup>) p. 14.—*Sigtrygg's sons*. Guthfrith, for a short time King of Dublin. Harald, Lord of Limerick, killed 940, whose son Magnus was King of Man. Olaf Cuaran. Sigfrith, and Haisl, both killed at Brunanburh. (*A.S. Chron., Annals of Clonmacnois, &c.*)

(<sup>13</sup>) p. 14.—*Olaf*. This name appears under many forms—Olaf, Anlaf, Aulaf, Onlaf, Onalaf, Unlaf, Ambhlaiph, Ambhlaeibh, Avelock. According to Magnusson, in the ninth century it was Anlaif, in the tenth Alaf (pronounced Arlarf), in the eleventh Olaf (Olarf), and afterwards Olaf. (*Corpus Boreale*).

(<sup>14</sup>) p. 18.—*Brunanburh*—alluded to by chroniclers for centuries after as “the great fight,” a battle that affected the destiny of England as greatly as Hastings, Trafalgar, or the defeat of the Armada. Mentioned under many names—Brunanburh, Brunnanbyrig, Bruneford, Brune, Brunandune, Wendune, Vinheath, with variations. Localised by various authors at sites ranging from Dumfries to Devon. Only one ancient chronicler (Florence, of Worcester) mentions the Humber, which to a southern writer, might stand for any northern estuary. Olaf Guthfrithson of Dublin, with his 615 ships, was obviously the chief of the expedition, and it is hard to believe that he would pilot such a fleet all the way round by the dangerous Pentland Firth, or the Land's End, when he might simply cross to the Mersey or the Dee. He would have met with help or hindrance at the Orkneys, York, &c., which we do not hear of. (Collingwood). So would Constantine, if he had marched down the East Coast, but if he came by the Maiden Way through Cumbria he would escape opposition, and be joined by Owain of Strathclyde, both proceeding to join Olaf and the Vikings of Orkney and

the Hebrides, under Geleachan, who was killed in the battle, in the neighbourhood of Chester. Consequently Bromborough on the Mersey (A. C. Gibson) anciently Brunbrae, seems likely, but the mystery of the site is still to be explained.

The usual complement of a warship was 100 men, but on the occasion of an invasion many more would be crammed in, making a minimum of 60,000 men brought by Olaf. The total strength of the allies was probably about 120,000.

(<sup>15</sup>) p. 20.—*Dunmail*, Domhnail, or Donal, son of Donal and grandnephew of Constantine. Last king of Strathclyde from c. 937 to c. 945. He seems to have had power in Wales after his defeat, and died on pilgrimage to Rome. (*Wendover and Ulster Annals*).

(<sup>16</sup>) p. 21.—*Seascale and Hawkbarrow*. Setrskali or Saeterskali, the dwelling by the low pasture. Like the two Seathwaites, which are miles inland, Seascale has lost the final consonants. It has no connection with "sea" as has been so long thought. Hawkbarrow is a rocky knoll jutting out into what was once swamp, and seems to have been artificially steepened. It would be easy to fortify.

(<sup>17</sup>) p. 22.—*Cinderdale*. The slag heap is in the field west of the bridge, just inside the little gate. There are more slag heaps north of the road at Smithy Beck, half way up Wastwater, and another at Gaterigghow.

(<sup>18</sup>) p. 23.—*Cumbria* thus became a fief of England, held by Malcolm, but outside England, as it always had been, and remained until 1092. (R. S. Ferguson's *Cumberland*).

(<sup>19</sup>) p. 24.—*Cuaran's third coming*. Olaf saw his chance now that there was no king at York; but this time he was distinctly sub-king to Eadred.

(<sup>20</sup>) p. 26.—*Kings slain at Stanemoor*. Two other names are mentioned, but at least one of these had been previously killed by Bloodaxe.

(<sup>21</sup>) p. 27.—*Brooches*. The large round brooches found in Norse graves are invariably in pairs. (Anderson's *Scotland in Pagan times*). 69

(<sup>22</sup>) p. 28.—*Baptism of Vikar*. Pagan baptism is frequently alluded to in Norse poems. Fairhair himself was baptized in this manner. By so doing the father acknowledged his paternity.

(<sup>23</sup>) p. 28.—*Patrickeld*—in Ponsonby, alluded to a thirteenth century deed. (West's *Antiquities of Furness*, p. 194).

(<sup>24</sup>) p. 30.—*Palnatoki at Stepheney*. This is quite possible. Palnatoki, Olöf and Stefuir are all historical. The story is located in Bretland, which meant Cumbria as well as Wales.

(<sup>25</sup>) p. 30.—*Bath*. Both Norsemen and Danes were very cleanly, bathing regularly on Saturdays and combing their hair each day. The Saxon ladies appreciated these habits, hence the Saxons hated Northmen the more. (John of Wallingford).

(<sup>26</sup>) p. 32.—*Eyvind's Lay*. The stanza is a paraphrase of part of the Helge Lay, an attempt to show that to the Norsemen it went with a swing, as inspiring to them as a Kipling ballad to the soldier of the present day.

(<sup>27</sup>) p. 34.—*The bloody cloud*. Said to have been visible several nights in the year of Ethelred's accession. Possibly an Aurora, or the reflected glow of a distant volcanic eruption. (*A.S. Chron.*).

(<sup>28</sup>) p. 35.—*Olaf Cuaran*, Sigtryg's son, of the family of Ivar. A powerful and strenuous Prince who never knew when he was beaten, born c. 912, the hero of a hundred legends, and the prototype of Hamlet. Four times driven from York. After the third occasion, in 945, he drove out his cousin Blakari, King of Dublin, plundered Cill Cuilinn 946, attacked Dublin 947, where his brother Guthfrith was king next year, at York from 949 to 952, sacked Inisdowill 953, King of Dublin 955, won victory over Irish 956, attacked and wounded by Sigtrygg Cam 961, defeated at Kilkenny 964, plundered Kells 970, victorious at Belan 977, killed the two heirs of Ireland Muircheartach and Conghalach, defeated at Tara 979, died at Iona 981.



He was thrice married (1) to Constantine's daughter; (2) to Gormflaith, sister of the King of Leinster; (3) to Donnflaith; and had several children. 1—Ragnvald, killed at Tara. 2—Gluniarainn, King of Dublin. 3—Sigtrygg Silkbeard, King of Dublin. 4—Harald, killed 1000. 5—Maccus assassinated c. 953. 6—Gillapatric. 7—Maeltuired (daughter). 8—Gyda, prototype of Shelagh.

(<sup>29</sup>) p. 35.—*Sacrifice for Murrain*. A fever in men and a dysentery in cattle (Simeon of Durham). Calf burial continued long as a superstition. About a century ago a sheep was buried, probably alive, by a Gosforth man, at a spot where three parishes met. Kidbeck was the nearest place of the kind to his house. The stone with the footmark is by the roadside, 65 yards west of Berry Brow Gate.

(<sup>30</sup>) p. 36.—*Kirkgarth*. A heathen could not be buried in the churchyard. A Norseman would be buried on his own howe, but a prime signed man might lie on the edge of the churchyard (Egil Saga). The priest looked upon the death words of Vikar as a conversion.

(<sup>31</sup>) p. 37.—*Vikar's cross*. The "Fishing" cross, fragments of which are in the north aisle of Gosforth Church.

(<sup>32</sup>) p. 39.—*Prime signed*. Half baptized. The first signing with the cross, a common custom among merchants and heathen soldiers serving under Christian leaders, so that they could hold interviews with Christian and heathen alike, while retaining their own faith. Unless this was done, a Christian might not, theoretically, have any dealings with unbelievers.

(<sup>33</sup>) p. 44.—*Ethelred's raid*. It is straining fact to say that the Norsemen of Gosforth would not pay Danegeld, for Cumbria was not in Ethelred's kingdom; but the king no doubt blamed the power of the Northern Colony for it and was determined to check that power by ravaging the whole district. This time the land of Gasford was not to escape, the king probably meaning to return by sea from Ravenglass, ravaging Furness on

his way ; or he may have relied upon provisions brought by the fleet.

(<sup>84</sup>) p. 46.—*Sword strings*. The sword was tied into its sheath in time of peace by strings which could be easily broken. It was death or outlawry to draw a weapon at the Thing, and men came there weaponless, a rule which could not be followed on an occasion such as this one.

(<sup>85</sup>) p. 47.—*Caer-n-arfon and Bekkjarmot*. Caer-n-arfon, the stronghold opposite Man, an ancient fortified place, afterwards called by the Normans Carnarvon Castle. Bekkjarmot—the mote hill by the beck, a Norse name for Caer-n-arfon, which later became the name of the village below it, Beckermont now Beckermet.

(<sup>86</sup>) p. 49.—*Hvitsuntid*. Up to 1800 the young people of Gosforth watched for sunrise on Whitsunday, uttering a wish when they first caught sight of it.

(<sup>87</sup>) p. 58.—*Murder of Gunnhild*. A striking instance of the unworthiness of Ethelred, showing also that the Angles were as bloodthirsty as any Dane. Pallig, Gunnhild's husband, was chief of the Danes in the service of Ethelred, yet he and his son were murdered before his wife's eyes, and then Gunnhild, a Princess, a Christian, and a hostage, (Collingwood), beheaded. No crime attributed to Vikings could be worse than this.

(<sup>88</sup>) p. 61.—*Griss cross*. The head and a fragment are built in near the hogbacks in the north aisle, and the sundial shaft was made out of part of it, in 1789.

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